Commentary
VOLUME NINETY • NUMBER ONE • JULY 1990

How to Save Free Trade—and Still Trade With Japan

Irwin M. Stelzer

On the Scarcity of Black Professors

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A Talmud for Americans

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What the Anti-Communists Knew

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Marshall Wexler's Brilliant Career—A Story

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Trashing Wall Street

George Russell

From Judaism to Jewishness

David Singer

Books in Review: Elliott Abrams / Steven Beller / Stanley Rothman / Williamson Murray / Thomas Short

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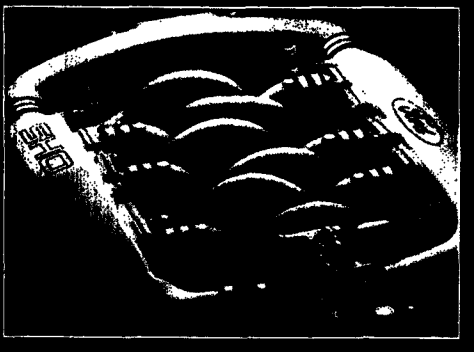

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Commentary

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Editor-in-Chief
Norman Podhoretz

Editor
Neal Kozodoy

Managing Editor: Marion Magid
Associate Editor: Brenda Brown
Production Manager: Bruce Lodi
Circulation Manager: Helene Hansen

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EDITORIAL & BUSINESS OFFICES: 165 E. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10022
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Letters from Readers

Gorbachev's Russia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is easy to agree with Richard Pipes in "Gorbachev's Russia: Breakdown or Crackdown?" [March] that the collapse of the Soviet empire is due to force of circumstance rather than a sudden conversion of Gorbachev to democratic liberalism, a miracle only to be rivaled in history by Constantine's embrace of Christianity. Beyond that, unfortunately, Mr. Pipes appears as guilty of unintentionally allowing ideology to distort facts as the "dovish" intellectuals he so rightly excoriates.

Given his exclusion of the Gorbachev "miracle" thesis, the gravamen of Mr. Pipes's argument turns on explaining what unique circumstances arose during the 1980's that led to the implosion of Soviet power in 1989, rather than happening at some earlier date or never happening at all. The factors he puts forth do not answer the question. Moral bankruptcy? The crimes of Stalin and the party he embodied were already denounced by Khrushchev in 1963. Restiveness in Eastern Europe? This part of the Soviet empire never ceased being in open or passive rebellion since Soviet occupation during World War II. Economic backwardness? The Soviet economy in the 1980's was certainly no worse, if not markedly better, than under Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev.

The unique and obvious factor, of course, was the Soviet military debacle in Afghanistan. For the first time since World War II, the Soviets committed their own forces outside the immediate Communist orbit. To everyone's surprise, both East and West, the leaderless, primitively armed, and outmanned Afghan mujaheddin began decimating the vaunted Red Army at an alarming rate. After seven years of strenuous effort, including unprecedented atrocities against civilians, the Soviets ran out of bombs and booby-trapped children's toys. They were forced to turn tail. The fact that the Kremlin emperor no longer wore bulletproof clothes was not lost on his captive subjects. The rest, as they say, is history.

It thus seems utterly amazing, in the course of a long article which expatiates on such matters as British Labor party politics in the 1920's, that Mr. Pipes finds no room at all to mention the Soviet military defeat in Afghanistan. . . . Why would he commit so glaring a lapse? We must assume the reason to be a psychological inhibition; the facts surrounding Afghanistan fit so poorly with the ideological thesis he is most anxious to prove. This thesis is stated forthrightly and up front: i.e., some time around 1980, according to Mr. Pipes, the elections of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher ushered in a new spirit of genuine liberalism, characterized by impatience with "the burden of supporting the less productive elements in society." This, in turn, helped spark the seminal revolt in Poland, where . . . "Solidarity espoused the very ideals that the left-wing intellectuals in the West labeled neoconservative: its heroes were Thatcher and Reagan."

So much for the ideology: now to the facts. It turns out that in the alleged watershed year of 1980, Margaret Thatcher and her French and German friends had other things on their minds than inspiring Solidarity. They were at that time busy undermining and profiting from the agricultural and industrial sanctions invoked by President Carter in reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Furthermore, anyone active in government during this period—including Mr. Pipes—was well aware that a sword of Damocles hung over the new-fledged Solidarity movement. Just as soon as the West signaled its acquiescence by agreeing to the huge Siberian gas-pipeline deal, paid for in advance and guaranteeing the Soviets billions in hard-currency earnings, Solidarity would be promptly squashed. And so it happened, on the Sunday following the signing ceremony presided over by Leonid Brezhnev and Helmut Schmidt.

To make matters worse, it was Mrs. Thatcher who personally nailed Solidarity's coffin shut by being the first to break the embargo on the reexport of gas compressors, which the Reagan administration belatedly threw up in an attempt to stop the gas, and Polish blood, from flowing. Being fully aware of all this, for Mr. Pipes now to state that someone like Lech Walesa would consider Mrs. Thatcher a hero—when she so clearly valued his life and cause far less than the profits to be gotten from the sale

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of gas machinery—verges close to the obscene.

As for Mr. Pipes's other hero of the age, Ronald Reagan, perhaps the best that could be said is that he was too "preoccupied" to know which of the warring factions of his administration to support during the pipeline imbroglio. But . . . he, too, eventually joined the rest in shoring up the teetering Soviet empire by selling it wheat at subsidized prices. . . .

The mujaheddin and Solidarity, the precipitating agents of the Soviet collapse, lived to fight another day not because of, but rather despite, the doings of Thatcher and Reagan. On the other hand, the much despised Jimmy Carter might be seen as something of a hero or martyr; it was he alone who was willing to take real economic hits and risk popular support in reacting to Soviet aggression. And let us also not forget the Democratic-controlled Congress which year after year slogged for the thing that really mattered in the end—military aid to the mujaheddin—while Reagan hared off after outrageously expensive gadgets like Star Wars and B-2 bombers. These ultimately proved to be of no consequence, save to the pockets of American taxpayers and defense contractors. . . .

I count myself a proud member of the neoconservative movement, . . . and I do not ask Mr. Pipes to replace the images of Reagan and Thatcher with those of Jimmy Carter and Tip O'Neill in the neoconservative pantheon. Perhaps the pedestals should remain vacant for the moment. What I do urge is that he stop contributing to the absurd, if modish, notion that somehow history either stopped or is now permanently on our side, and all that is left on the neoconservative agenda is to bask in the roseate, but false, glow of the Reagan presidency. . . .

ALLEN S. GREENBERG
Bethesda, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

To Richard Pipes's question, "Breakdown or Crackdown?," I am inclined to answer "crackdown."

One of the more amazing constants of Soviet history is that the Soviet regime has always managed to win out over its adversaries despite hopeless odds. The Soviet regime faced collapse in 1921, 1932, and 1941-43, and yet it triumphed. Internal crises are not limited to the period before 1945, either. There were widespread revolts in the gulag in the late 40's, and in 1968, to quote Vladimir Bukovsky, "Entire nationalities threatened to rise in revolt, challenging the very existence of the last colonial empire."

The Soviet Union has always answered such crises with brutality. It has also used deception to hide preparations for a crackdown. . . .

What should be universally clear by now is that Gorbachev's primary goal is amassing all the power he can possibly get. He also wants to keep Eastern Europe and the rest of the Soviet empire. His policy toward Afghanistan reveals a great deal about Gorbachev's words and deeds, and about Western perceptions. He withdrew the troops sent there in 1979, but increased military aid greatly to a point where the Soviet Union is now spending considerably more money in Afghanistan than it did during the invasion (a fact that cuts the ground out of claims that the Soviets withdrew because they could no longer afford the cost of the war). . . .

There is no way any transition in the Soviet Union from totalitarianism will be peaceful. Eventually, Gorbachev will have to fight. Whenever this happens, it will be bad news for Europe, because internal crisis and repression in the Soviet Union have traditionally gone hand in hand with foreign imperialism. The invasion of Poland in 1920, the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, the invasion of East Germany in 1953, of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and of Afghanistan in 1979 all followed upon or occurred during periods of grave crisis and/or internal repression.

MICHAEL DALY
Wakefield, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It seems to me that, in comparing the U.S. and Soviet educational systems, Richard Pipes carries his denigration of the Soviet Union a bit too far. That American youngsters have twelve years of elementary and secondary schooling while Soviet youngsters have only nine matters less than what the students know at the end of their schooling. And as observers have noted in recent years, too many U.S. youngsters know appallingly little after twelve years of schooling. My parents and other relatives who had only the six years of free schooling that His Royal Majesty provided for his loyal Irish subjects

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at the turn of the century, for example, could write better than some students I have taught in freshman composition classes at two Midwestern universities.

Mr. Pipes's statement that 15 percent of Soviet youth go on to institutions of higher education compared with 34 percent in the United States is similarly misleading. In Great Britain, France, and West Germany, too, the percentage of students going on to institutions of higher education is smaller than in the United States, because rigorous national examinations screen out many who in the United States would be admitted to college. Yet if colleges must conduct courses in remedial reading and remedial writing, as they must in this country, then they are not in those instances functioning as institutions of higher learning, and the students taking such courses have not gone on to higher learning. . . .

JOHN MAHER
Michigan City, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I marveled at Richard Pipes's discovery of assorted pearls of wisdom from John Kenneth Galbraith, Seweryn Bialer, and other prominent liberal commentators on the USSR. He might have added to his collection the reflections of one of our more telegenic liberal commentators, Princeton's Stephen F. Cohen.

While Bialer and Galbraith's understanding of the USSR's economic success preceded official Soviet revelations to the contrary, Cohen's insights came four years after Gorbachev began exposing the full extent of the Soviet catastrophe. In an interview in the May 1989 issue of *Kommunist*, the central theoretical organ of the Soviet Communist party, Cohen told Soviet readers that:

> In America there is more democracy than "universal welfare." We have, say, no comprehensive system of medical insurance. Medical care is extraordinarily expensive. With you it is otherwise. Perhaps your medicine is not the best quality but it is free for the entire society! In other words, you have created a vast "universal welfare state," although not the very best one. At the same time, excuse me, you have not very much democracy.

It is a comforting sign of the times that while this analysis may appeal in this country to readers of the *Nation*, for which Cohen also writes, today even among readers of *Kommunist* there are few who would subscribe to this extraordinary tribute to the Soviet welfare state.

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD
Russian Research Center
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

At the conclusion of his article, Richard Pipes writes that "as power slips from the [Communist] party's hands, politics may become polarized between the forces of reaction and those of anarchy and separatism." That scenario is certainly possible, but I think it is less likely than one in which the Soviet Union, after a certain amount of internal strife, comes roughly to resemble a Western democracy. It will also be transformed in another way, becoming a confederation of loosely connected states—a kind of backward Eastern version of the European Community.

To be sure, anti-democratic forces obviously still exist in the Soviet Union. How strong are they? Perhaps the most pervasive anti-democratic force is Leninist inertia and resentment—the strong feeling on the part of millions of diehard party bureaucrats that Gorbachev is making life miserable for them. Yet though these people can grumble and even sabotage some of Gorbachev's reforms, ultimately they are powerless because they are unpopular; they are usually defeated in elections to the Congress of People's Deputies. Many Western observers, for example, have made much of the potential threat to Gorbachev by Yegor Ligachev, who is considered to be the spokesman for the Leninist apparatus, but the Soviet chess champion Gary Kasparov said recently that "it is a joke to imagine that Mr. Gorbachev is in some kind of danger from Mr. Ligachev. Whenever there is a conflict among Soviet leaders, Gorbachev wins easily." . . .

What about those Leninists who rally behind the flag of Russian nationalism, Leninists who advocate a kind of neo-Stalinist Russian-nationalist medicine for what ails the Soviet Union? Certainly, in recent months the Russian nationalists—especially the xenophobic anti-Semitic group Pamyat—have been very active, with their words and sometimes with their fists. In *Literaturnaya Rossiya*, the Soviet journal that is most receptive to their views, Russian nationalists regularly utter the cry: "Who lost Eastern Europe?" They blame the disintegration of the Soviet empire on the Westernizing reforms of Gorbachev. But even though this nationalist-*cum*-Stalinist ideology has more potency than simple old-fashioned Leninism, it too remains politically weak. No doubt many Russians support a watered-down version of Russian nationalism—protecting the environment as well as restoring their cultural heritage—but most look to the West for their ideas about how the USSR should be governed.

Politically weak though they are, however, what if the forces of reaction were to line up with the military and KGB, urging a takeover to prevent further loss of empire and further internal disorder? Certainly this is a greater possibility than the previous scenarios because it depends on the use of force, not public opinion. Moreover, the Soviet military is unhappy with many of Gorbachev's reforms and is becoming more vocal about its unhappiness. . . .

But even granting that the military worries Gorbachev—and recently he has gone out of his way to praise them—is the army likely to join with the KGB in an effort to seize power? The answer is no, because the military knows that a takeover would only exacerbate whatever problems the Soviet Union currently has. The USSR's overwhelming array of domestic problems—from food shortages to shortages of medical supplies—cannot be resolved by military fiat. The interethnic conflict, which has led to increased desertions and a growing number of draft dodgers, does not lend itself to a military solution, for example. Nor can the military do anything about its own technological backwardness. The weakness of the Soviet military can only be solved by economic and political means.

If it is unlikely that Gorbachev will be forced from power either by disaffected party members or by a military-KGB coup, what about Gorbachev himself? What is he going to do with all the power he has amassed? Many observers have pointed out that the presidential system of government he has now created has given him extraordinary power. No one knows how he will use this power, but if he is serious about the "radicalization of

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economic reform"—which he said was one of his most urgent tasks as president—then he cannot afford to play the tyrant. Given the half-measures of *perestroika*, some Western observers are skeptical that Gorbachev will truly pursue radical economic reform, but it does seem that this time he is going to move full steam ahead. In recent weeks he has spoken of creating "market relations," and the man he appointed as his personal adviser on economics, Nikolai Petrakov, is known as a kind of Russian Milton Friedman. According to many observers, what Gorbachev has in mind is an approach to economic reform that is similar to Poland's.

But the radical reforms now under way in Poland would hardly have been possible if the Polish government did not have the legitimacy earned through a popular vote. Gorbachev has no such legitimacy. Yet in order to build support for painful reforms, he has no choice but to try to court popular and parliamentary opinion. Though the Congress of People's Deputies is still a weak force, it is likely to get stronger and stronger as the deputies begin to organize. Already on March 31, Tass reported that 170 deputies had met to discuss the formation of a "Democratic Russia" political bloc, and almost all the prominent public and political figures of democratic leaning in the Russian republic have now joined this bloc. On the same day Tass also announced that the Liberal Democratic party held its founding congress in Moscow, with party leaders claiming some 3,000 members.

Gorbachev could attempt to ignore this growing civil society—or even threaten to make it impotent, since he can issue decrees with binding force throughout the USSR. But if he continually invokes his strong executive powers, he will risk undermining his radical economic program.

Some believe that even if Gorbachev encouraged the growth of civil society, his economic program might run into trouble for another reason: the so-called Russian character. Russians, it is often said, have a primitive political culture; they are used to directives from above; they find parliamentary democracy anarchic. And since they have never experienced a market economy, they will be disturbed by the resultant inequality of income, leading eventually to a backlash which will strengthen the hand of the Leninists and the nationalists.

This kind of analysis does Russians an injustice. Though they have no experience of living in a democratic society, they have now come to know that there are two kinds of income inequality—that of the West, which is based on market forces, and that of their own country, which is based on party privileges. Surely most Russians would prefer the kind of inequality that puts food on the table.

The final factor that could wreck the transition to some kind of democratic system is the nationality question. It is certainly true that nationality problems continue to be a big headache for Gorbachev, and it is also true that anti-Russian sentiment on the part of different ethnic groups is already resulting in a resurgence of Russian imperial feeling—that is, a call to strengthen the military and the party in order to put the Soviet house in order and teach those ungrateful non-Russians a thing or two.

But most Russian nationalists, I daresay, know that a reassertion of Soviet imperial power is wishful thinking, . . . and even they are coming to the conclusion that the Soviet empire has exacted a terrible price from the Russians.

Certainly, the current struggle between the Lithuanians and the Kremlin is an ominous sign that the predominantly Russian leaders of the Soviet Union are reluctant to shed their empire, but to my mind Gorbachev's maneuvers here are essentially a defensive reaction, a way to make the breakup of the Soviet Union proceed in a seemly and orderly way—one that does not provoke a Stalinist-nationalist reaction. Vasilii Selyunin, a Soviet writer who has accurately predicted a number of recent developments in the USSR, said recently that by the turn of the century there will probably be a loose confederation consisting of Russia, the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, Armenia, and perhaps Moldavia.

There is also concrete evidence that many Russians are simply giving up on the empire—moving from the republics back to Russia, . . . and this exodus is likely to increase in the near future.

In short, the dynamics at work in the Soviet Union are in the main positive—a desire to throw out the Leninist diehards, an awareness that the average man fares better in democratic market-oriented societies, and a realization that the empire has not been good for many Russians, despite the fact that they have chiefly been its rulers.

This view may seem Pollyannaish to some, but it is based on an assessment not only of what the Soviet people think but also of what drives Gorbachev and his advisers. They may have no desire to usher in Russian democracy, but they also know that if the Soviet Union does not institute radical economic reforms—to strengthen its weakening credit rating and attract Western capital—its military power will in some respects diminish, its standard of living will get even worse, its supply of energy will become precarious, and its environmental situation will remain catastrophic. And radical economic reforms will inevitably bring democracy in their wake.

STEPHEN MILLER
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
Washington, D.C.

RICHARD PIPES writes:

I know of no evidence that the defeat in Afghanistan was the critical event causing Moscow fundamentally to alter its domestic and foreign policies, as Allen S. Greenberg would have us believe. To be sure, it was an unpopular and humiliating war, but if the regime had enjoyed internal stability and economic progress, it could have gone on for many more years. At any rate, none of the Soviet sources I have read and none of the Soviet personalities I have talked to, official as well as dissident, agrees with Mr. Greenberg's thesis that the Afghan debacle was the "unique and obvious factor" behind Gorbachev's turnabout. Nor do I think the Russians pulled out of Afghanistan because they had run out of "bombs and booby-trapped children's toys." They seem to lack no weapons of destruction to supply the quisling government they have left behind.

It is clear that Mr. Greenberg is disappointed with both Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and not entirely without cause. But I did not give them credit, as he erroneously claims, for "help[ing] spark" Solidarity. In my article I noted that the process of emancipation from the socialist and bureaucratic mentality ran a parallel course in the West and East: "a process similar in effect although different in origin" were the words I used.

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In deriding President Reagan's policies in 1981-82, Mr. Greenberg conveniently forgets the sanctions which Reagan and Reagan alone of the world's statesmen imposed on Poland and the USSR as punishment for the suppression of Solidarity. Mr. Greenberg only remembers their lifting. But it was precisely Reagan's punitive measures that made him a hero to millions of Poles. I happen to have been closely involved in the decision to enforce an embargo on pipeline compressors and I can assure Mr. Greenberg that the President was not "too 'preoccupied'" to involve himself, but made the decision personally against considerable opposition in the cabinet.

As for the "end of history," there is nothing in my article or in any of my other writings to suggest that I subscribe to this sophomoric notion. The purpose of my article was precisely the opposite: to warn that history is always open-ended and can only be given meaning retrospectively.

It is true, as Michael Daly argues, that the Soviet leadership has managed in the past to overcome all of its domestic crises. And it may, indeed, do so again. But the difference between now and then is that, until recently, the Communist party enjoyed unlimited and effective power. That power rapidly eroded after 1985. Since then, the Communist party has been repeatedly unable to have its way. The fact that Gorbachev has shifted his nominal power base from the party to the state is the most telling evidence of a need to find another vehicle for administering the country. Whether he will succeed in transforming the party-based dictatorship, constrained by the Politburo, into a state-based one, only mildly inhibited by semi-representative bodies, remains to be seen. Right now the Soviet Union has a curious dyarchy which reminds one more of the Provisional Government of 1917 than of the regimes of Lenin and his successors.

John Maher deduces from the fact that U.S. students are ill-informed that Soviet students, because there are proportionately fewer of them, are superior. But surely this is false logic; it leads one to argue that the fewer the young people who attend schools, the better educated they are. The Soviet source from which I quoted made no such claims. Soviet youths who emigrate to this country do not seem especially better prepared than our own. I suspect that the decline of educational standards is worldwide.

I wish that Gabriel Schoenfeld or someone like him would compile an anthology of liberal inanities about Communism and the Soviet Union. Translated and published in the USSR, it would bring many moments of joy to the inhabitants of that unfortunate country.

Affirmative Action

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thomas Sowell's provocative article, "'Affirmative Action': A Worldwide Disaster" [December 1989], points to many weaknesses in the theory and practice of affirmative action. But since there is no given definition of affirmative action, it is not a difficult exercise to locate unsound ideologies and disastrous programs under that broad umbrella. Nor is it difficult to identify good policies and positive outcomes. . . . Does the existence of ideological faults, weak implementation, and distortion justify the sweeping conclusions suggested by the title? Surely it does not. The article does not face up to positive results or to affirmative-action objectives based on individual rights. . . .

1. A scheme to minimize handicaps owing to group membership may involve group-based preferences. This does not require the achievement of statistical parity, which may be neither feasible nor equitable, since the disparity may be partly due to cultural differences. On the other hand, gross imbalances might suggest the probability of significant group-based disabilities and the possibility of some discrimination. Such discrimination may be due to a variety of factors which may or may not involve prejudice on the part of the decision-maker (as analyzed by Kenneth Arrow, Thomas Schelling, Alan Wertheimer, and others). But the justification for affirmative action is based not on the apportionment of blame but rather on the existence of group-based advantages and disadvantages. The main objective is not to compensate for wrongs suffered but to help overcome certain group disabilities such as those related to ethnicity and gender.

2. Mr. Sowell questions the validity of claims for historical compensation. This factor has been urged by some as imparting a moral imperative to affirmative action. Are U.S. blacks entitled to reparations from U.S whites because their current handicaps in relation to whites are partly attributable to past oppression of blacks by whites? Is Israel . . . entitled to reparations from the countries of Europe for the past oppression of Jews in those countries? There are many interesting studies on the subject, . . . but the case for affirmative action does not rest on acceptance of the principle of reparations.

3. Many of Mr. Sowell's explanations for the persistence of great intergroup inequalities establish rather than undermine the case for affirmative action. Major interethnic imbalances in one generation may lead not only to significant inequality in life chances for the next generation but also to prejudice and discrimination. Even if there were initially no hostility or prejudice, it would be rational to use ethnicity as a screening device in selection. . . . Thus the implementation of President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order to "take affirmative action to ensure that the applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin" may require active group-specific intervention irrespective of the existence of any prejudice on the part of the employer.

4. Mr. Sowell's defense against charges of racial discrimination in employment is based on the fact that there are large differences in educational opportunities: e.g., if blacks and whites go to different kinds of colleges and take up different disciplines, their qualifications will indeed have different values and employers will be justified in recognizing such differences. But this clinches the case for affirmative action to minimize the handicaps suffered on account of ethnicity even more surely than the charge of discrimination. Likewise, Mr. Sowell's defense against charges of caste discrimination in admission to Indian medical schools is based on the existence of severe intercaste imbalances in educational facilities from infancy. This would suggest that the cure should be made even more potent. Perhaps there should be a series of interventions starting in primary school rather than a single intervention at the point of entry into medical school.

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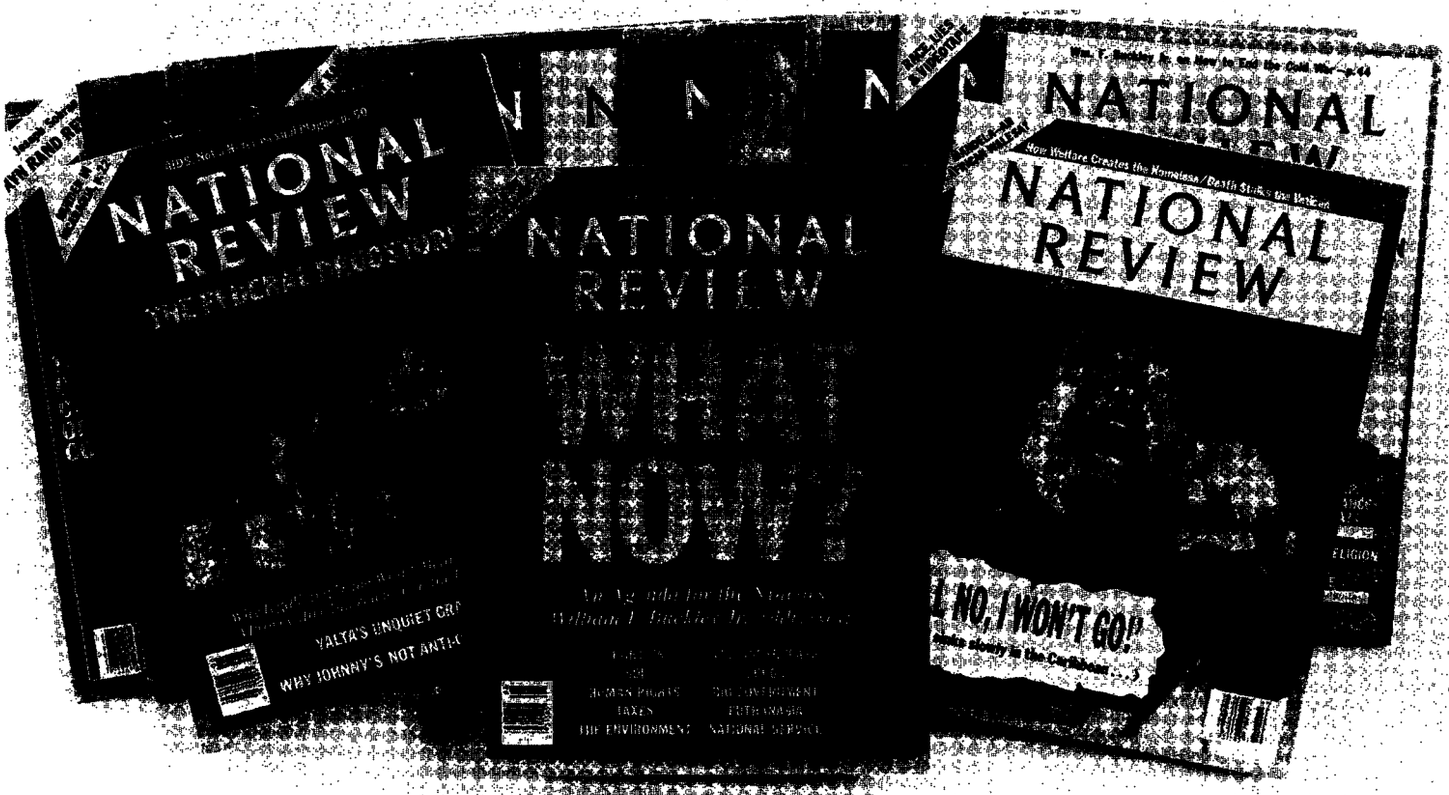

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5. There are many kinds of inequality in all societies. It may be argued that it is desirable to reduce all of these and not just the ones based on ethnicity and gender. But different kinds of policies are needed to tackle different kinds of inequalities. A program to reduce one type of inequality may aggravate another. For example, an indiscriminate scheme of "merit-based" scholarships in secondary schools may open avenues of mobility for certain sections of the urban lower-middle class and significantly reduce one type of imbalance in opportunity; but the net impact on certain other imbalances (interethnic or pertaining to gender or urban-rural differences) may be negligible or even negative.

A sophisticated program (or a package of programs) may need to be designed depending on the weights we assign to bridging the different types of gaps in opportunity. Extra weights need to be assigned to narrowing those disparities which tend to be self-perpetuating, e.g., through creating prejudices on account of ethnicity or gender. In turn, the remedies, whether or not they serve other socially desirable goals, are unacceptable if they are based on, or are likely to contribute to, prejudice or inequality.

In lumping together apartheid policies designed to reinforce a racial hierarchy in South Africa and affirmative-action policies designed to eliminate hierarchies in other societies, Mr. Sowell disregards the fundamental distinction between legitimate and illegitimate preferences which Ronald Dworkin, for example, has analyzed in his book, *Taking Rights Seriously*.

6. Mr. Sowell suggests that all improvements followed trends that were in place prior to affirmative action. There is indeed evidence that many of the changes designed to be achieved through preferential policies occurred before the enforcement machinery came into operation, but this is not a phenomenon peculiar to affirmative action. In the U.S., as in many other countries, there is a substantial willingness to follow leads given by national movements, by the political leadership, by the legislature and higher judiciary. Many institutions quickly and voluntarily detect and adapt to new trends which may be set prior to and irrespective of any enforcement. Enforcement mechanisms may consolidate or reinforce a trend or, by heavy-handed action, provoke a backlash, but the origins of the trend are often to be found elsewhere.

In the U.S., the civil-rights movement of the third quarter of this century, the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies, radical federal legislation, and a remarkable sequence of landmark judgments by the Supreme Court set a new trend and created an atmosphere which evoked a strong positive response from other political leaders, the state legislatures, the lower courts, public-sector agencies, private firms, educational institutions, professional bodies, and the public. That the implementation of affirmative action ran ahead of the legislation and enforcement in the environment of the 1960's does not imply that affirmative-action policies made no difference, but rather that there was wide acceptance of them in that decade.

7. Like many other policies, affirmative action has had both successes and failures in conception and implementation. Mr. Sowell attributes the failures to affirmative action and all progress to other factors. He suggests that preferential policies have undermined the integrity of Pakistan, for instance. But prejudice and discrimination against East Pakistanis were so open and widespread that the more credible conclusion would be that it is the *failure* to implement affirmative action which has contributed to Pakistan's troubles, including the secession of Bangladesh. He goes on to suggest that the riots against backward castes in Bombay are indicative of the failure of affirmative action. They are indeed linked to affirmative action but may be manifestations of the efforts by the high castes to stop what they recognize as progress toward achieving its objectives. Are the campus riots in the U.S. the consequences of affirmative action, or are they caused by the failure to implement affirmative action in the 80's and the related resurgence of racism?

8. Mr. Sowell is surely right in suggesting that disturbing ethnicity-based hierarchies and attempting to reduce interethnic gaps may increase friction. Black-white relations in the U.S. were smoothest under slavery, and even after Emancipation, there was less racial tension when Jim Crow laws prescribing segregation and regulating activity were mutually accepted.

In encouraging new aspirations, in promoting dissatisfaction with institutional obstacles to mobility, and in undermining the legitimacy of segregation and the established hierarchy, civil-rights ideologies undoubtedly contributed to provoking the riots which accompanied *Brown* and many of the civil-rights advances that followed. Jews, too, faced hostile, often violent, reaction when they sought to overcome barriers to their mobility in the early decades of this century. In India and South Africa also, every attempt to break down caste barriers or race barriers has invariably generated friction, which has frequently sparked off violence. How can it be otherwise? It is, of course, desirable to reduce tension and avoid riots, but whether or not we should do so by curtailing reforms depends on what kind of society we want and what price we are willing to pay to achieve that objective.

9. In the U.S. and elsewhere, affirmative action has had successes and failures. The picture is complex and varied, as shown in the works of scholars such as Marc Galanter in his monumental study of affirmative action in India, *Competing Equalities*. In sum, Mr. Sowell's claim that affirmative action "has been a failure in the U.S. and a disaster in other countries" which have had such policies longer is unwarranted by the evidence.

DEVANESAN NESIAH
Ministry of State for
Rehabilitation and
Reconstruction
Colombo, Sri Lanka

THOMAS SOWELL writes:

Devanesan Nesiah's argument begs all the questions and, above all, the central question: what do we know and how do we know it? His claim that my article has "no given definition of affirmative action" blithely ignores the definition given in the very first paragraph: "government apportionment of coveted positions, to supersede the competition of the marketplace or of academia." It is he who has no definition of the crucial terms of his argument, such as "imbalance," "disabilities," or "group-based advantages and disadvantages." Operationally, do "disadvantages," for example, mean institutional barriers *ex ante* or statistical results *ex post*? In Mr. Nesiah's own country, Sri Lanka, it was the Tamils who were "disadvantaged" *ex ante* but the Sin-

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halese who were "disadvantaged" *ex post*. After preferential policies, both were devastated in the bloody riots that escalated into civil war.

More specifically, let me answer him point by point.

1. To say that statistical differences between groups "might suggest" something nebulously called "disabilities" in addition to "the possibility of discrimination" is interesting speculation for a seminar. But are *courts of law* supposed to award multimillion-dollar damages on the basis of speculation—especially since those possibilities are offset by Mr. Nesiah's admission that statistical differences "may be partly due to cultural differences"? Demographic and locational differences are also among many other factors behind statistical differences. Are courts supposed to be playgrounds for theories or places where serious claims and serious consequences depend on evidence and proof?

2. Mr. Nesiah says nothing on the issue of "historical compensation" to justify my going through the arguments again. The readers of COMMENTARY are intelligent enough not to need a repetition—and not to be thrown off the trail by Mr. Nesiah's red herring.

3. Once again, Mr. Nesiah's speculation about what "may" happen slides into an assumption about what *does* happen and what policy should be.

4. Speculation turns to fiction when Mr. Nesiah discusses "Mr. Sowell's defense against charges of racial discrimination." There is no such defense, either in this article or in anything else I have ever written. The question Mr. Nesiah never faces is: what is to be regarded as evidence in a court of law, in a case involving specific litigants? Moreover, if he thought seriously about what he said when he referred to "handicaps suffered on account of ethnicity" and how that "clinches the case for affirmative action," then consistency would require him (and others) to conclude that Jews, Chinese, and Japanese should also be beneficiaries of quotas, instead of being victimized by them. But this assumes that phrases like "handicaps suffered on account of ethnicity" are meant seriously, not simply used as political rhetoric. Do "handicaps suffered on account of ethnicity" include internal cultural handicaps as well as external institutional discrimination? Transient as well as permanent handicaps? Nor does the undefined "intervention" tell us much about what ought to be done, or why it would be expected to make matters better rather than worse.

5. The distinction Mr. Nesiah makes between the *intentions* of some preferential policies and others has no relevance to my study of the *effects* of such policies. The similarities in effects are all the more striking because of the enormous differences in intentions, countries, and groups involved.

6. Mr. Nesiah's desperate efforts to evade the plain fact that trends widely attributed to affirmative action in fact antedate it once more subsitute speculation for evidence. In the case of blacks, the rise in income and occupations antedated affirmative action by *decades*. Surely, Mr. Nesiah is not suggesting that people were rushing to get on a bandwagon that had not yet been designed, much less built. Unfortunately, this clinging to social dogmas in the face of devastating facts to the contrary is not confined to Mr. Nesiah. The National Academy of Science's widely acclaimed book, *A Common Destiny*, says: "In terms of per-capita incomes, family incomes, and male workers' earnings, blacks gained relative to whites fairly steadily from 1939 to 1969." Then came a change: "Since the early 1970's, the economic status of blacks relative to whites has, on average, stagnated or deteriorated." Ironically, these data and dates show *more* racial economic progress *before* affirmative action than afterward. Yet this book reaches all the conventional conclusions, including a favorable view of affirmative action.

7. I have nowhere said that affirmative action "undermined the integrity of Pakistan." Almost equally reckless is Mr. Nesiah's suggestion that it is "the failure to implement affirmative action" in American colleges and universities which is responsible for a "resurgence of racism" on campus. Statistics on racial incidents show that they are most prevalent at liberal and radical institutions where there is more racial preference. Massachusetts alone had more such incidents than the entire South. Moreover, in many places the current levels of racial hostility and violence exceed anything seen in past generations on those campuses—however much Mr. Nesiah's dogma requires him to see it as a "resurgence."

8. If closing the gap between whites and minorities were the cause of friction and violence, then it is Asian Americans who would be the principal targets of campus backlash, for they have not only closed the gap but *exceeded* the performance of whites. On some elite campuses, they have taken more places from whites than have blacks and Hispanics put together. Once more, Mr. Nesiah has not found it necessary to test his hypothesis against any evidence. The evidence here suggests that the old song was right: "It ain't what you do; it's the way that you do it."

9. Mr. Nesiah's assertion that my conclusions were "unwarranted by the evidence" was only his second use of the word *evidence*. But he offered no evidence either time.

What is even more incredible than Mr. Nesiah's convoluted reasoning to justify preferential policies is that his own country—which was once justifiably held up as a model for harmonious intergroup relations—was so polarized by preferential policies that its people were burning each other alive in the streets and the whole country ultimately degenerated into a civil war whose end is not yet in sight.

Ukrainians and Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "'There Go Our Little Jews'" [April], David G. Roskies mentions the Ukrainian nationalists who came to Moscow in order to provide extra security for the All-Russian Conference of Jewish Organizations. I was present at the conference and can testify to the effective service rendered by those young volunteers.

Not only was the anti-Semitic Pamyat group heckling and attempting to block entry into the conference hall, but on one day a group of Palestinian students, masked to prevent identification, did likewise. Several efforts were made to gain entry to the hall by these groups and the Ukrainians forcibly kept them out.

I talked with one of the young Ukrainians (aged twenty-four), who said he was glad to be able to provide some security for a national group which, like his own, was striving for its own identity and freedom. As he spoke "American" English without accent, I inquired where he had acquired this ability.

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He replied, "in school," and then after a pause and with a slight smile added, "and in two semesters at Albany College of the State University of New York." He told me he hoped to remain in Moscow and be employed as an interpreter for one of the foreign businesses which he said were going to establish joint ventures in the USSR.

Three months have passed since then, and I can only speculate about the possibility of that young man's change of residence and vocation. The rapidity of changes in the USSR makes his aspiration more than a forlorn hope.

RICHARD MAASS
White Plains, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . When the local Ukrainian censor, as described by David G. Roskies, expunges a representation of "the notorious 17th-century pogromist," Bogdan Chmielnitsky, from a poster, it is sad. But when Mr. Roskies himself omits or fails to make an obvious connection, it is painful. I refer to two such omissions.

First, after referring to the "infamous blood-libel trial of Mendel Beilis," Mr. Roskies bemoans the Russian Jews' lack of knowledge of Jewish customs, specifically those customs having to do with the Passover seder. The one custom remembered (because an actor had once played a rabbi in a play) was the opening of the door for Elijah. Mr. Roskies might well have pointed out that this custom is connected with, and may have originated because of, the blood libel. During the seder, Jews would often open their doors in order to make certain that their "friendly" neighbors were not depositing any "evidence" that might give rise to the blood libel. Pointing out that connection would have been an . . . effective teaching tool at the seder Mr. Roskies describes in the capital of the Ukraine.

Second, I find it interesting that although Mr. Roskies writes, "There has not been nor will there ever be a moral reckoning for the Jewish blood spilled by Ukrainian hands," he himself never reckons with the thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of Jews who were slaughtered by the Ukrainian henchmen and allies of the Nazis during the Holocaust. My mother and father, whose Galician relatives had numbered in the hundreds before the war and were all killed save one, were informed by that sole survivor that the murderers of our family were those same so-very-willing at the time and now so "friendly" Ukrainians.

I find it hard to understand why that connection from Chmielnitsky in the 17th century to the Holocaust in the 20th century was not made. I would find it even harder to be in the Ukraine without remembering the Ukrainians' guilt. Their awful complicity needs to be acknowledged and atoned for before I would blithely bring Sholem Aleichem back to the Ukraine.

BENJAMIN HIRSCH
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I very much doubt that David G. Roskies has ever—let alone, "often"—read the Communist slogan, "national in form, cosmopolitan in content." The incantation's canonical form is "national in form, socialist in content." What makes this slip tragicomic is that "cosmopolitan" has long been a Soviet euphemism for "Jew bastard."

MAURICE FRIEDBERG
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

DAVID G. ROSKIES writes:

As the letters of Richard Maass and Benjamin Hirsch testify, the two poles of Jewish-Ukrainian relations cannot be reconciled. The unrequited grief over the Jewish dead is hardly mitigated by the outpouring of good will on the part of Ukrainian nationalists. And that is precisely what I experienced as well. If I did not specify whether Chmielnitsky, or Gonta, or Petlura, or Ivan the Terrible was responsible for the "Jewish blood spilled by Ukrainian hands," it was because the readers of COMMENTARY do not need me to instruct them on Ukrainian complicity with the Nazis (as dramatized by the Demjanjuk trial, for instance), or on the civil war of 1918-19 that claimed untold numbers of Jewish civilian lives. But since writing my article, I had occasion to hear Ivan Dziuba, a high-ranking member of the Ukrainian Rukh movement, tell a New York audience that the time had come to unveil the darker side of Ukrainian-Jewish history. This confirms Richard Maass's eyewitness account and goes beyond anything said to me in the Ukraine proper. Perhaps this was propaganda meant for Western ears alone. My own feeling is that Dziuba spoke sincerely.

As stated in the essay, I was inspired by Esther Rosenthal-Schneiderman's memoir-lament on the Yiddish cultural revival in the Soviet Union. In Volume 3 of *Oyf vegn un umvegn* (Tel Aviv, 1982), she quotes the Bolshevik formula, "national only in form, but absolutely *internatsyonalistish* in content." I realize now that "cosmopolitan" was an infelicitous translation and thank Maurice Friedberg for his correction.

Private Prisons

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of Charles Logan's book, *Private Prisons: Cons and Pros* [Books in Review, March], John J. DiIulio, Jr. asserts that private-prison firms "have assiduously avoided going into [the] area" of high-security facilities. This is simply not the case.

The private-prison industry has had to fight public unease and organized opposition at every step in its evolution. It is hardly surprising that its first successes would be in providing ancillary services (food services, medical care, work programs), which have now become so common as to be noncontroversial in most states. The second stage was for private firms to contract to operate lower-profile facilities, such as juvenile camps and county jail work-release centers. These, too, are now relatively noncontroversial.

By the mid-80's private-prison firms began seeking contracts to operate county jails and state-prison facilities. For the most part, public officials offered only minimum-security facilities for contract operation, apparently judging that this was the most feasible way of introducing the concept to full-time, adult correctional facilities. Those few proposals for developing free-standing, private high-security prisons (e.g., by Buckingham Security in Pennsylvania) failed to win state approval.

It is only in the past two years that public officials have begun to encourage private corrections firms to advance to medium- and maximum-security facilities. In 1988, New Mexico let a contract to Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) to build and operate a women's prison for medium- and maximum-security prisoners. Late last year, Louisiana selected CCA to operate the state prison in Winn Parish, a medium-security facility.

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And Florida is in the final stages of selecting a firm to build and operate a 1,100-person maximum-security prison.

The charge of "cream-skimming" by private corrections firms does not stand up to close scrutiny. As rapidly as public officials have opened a segment of the market to the private sector, the companies in this field have moved in to offer their services.

ROBERT W. POOLE, JR.
President, Reason Foundation
Santa Monica, California

JOHN J. DIIULIO, JR. writes:

Robert W. Poole, Jr. needs to learn more about both corrections and the role of private firms in the administration, financing, and constructing of penal facilities. This is not the place for a tutorial on the history of private involvement in the field, but let me just point out that classification systems vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction so that the "high-security" bids he cites are less than meets the eye. As for his one meaningful example—New Mexico's women's prison—I will be happy to share with him my evaluation of the effort, which is being conducted for the National Institute of Corrections in conjunction with the pro-privatization author of the book that I reviewed. Finally, that the firms have "creamed" the easy cases is too clear (even to the candid private-prison executives themselves) to merit much discussion. Mr. Poole is entitled to his ideology, and I to my analysis.

T.S. Eliot

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of Christopher Ricks's book, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* [Books in Review, March], Hilton Kramer points out that the question of Eliot's prejudice is disproportionately made to turn on whether he showed prejudice against women in the recurring lines from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

> In the room the women come
> and go
> Talking of Michelangelo.

According to Ricks's reading of these lines, as quoted in Hilton Kramer's review, "For all we *know*, . . . the women [referred to in the couplet] could be talking as invaluably as . . . Kenneth Clark." Mr. Kramer, however, sides with "such distinguished figures as John Crowe Ransom, Hugh Kenner, and Helen Gardner" in holding that Ricks's reading is not correct.

I believe I have unearthed an unnoticed piece of evidence bearing on the phrase "talking of Michelangelo" that casts some light on Eliot's reference. Eliot, who called himself "Old Possum" and characteristically used quotations from other writers to carry his argument, is slyly paraphrasing his fellow Missourian, Mark Twain, here. In *Innocents Abroad*, describing American tribulations with the cultural tour of Europe, Twain wrote: "I do not want Michelangelo for breakfast . . . for luncheon—for dinner—for tea—for supper—for between meals."

Like Mark Twain, Eliot repeats the reference to conversations about Michelangelo so that it occurs not just once but twice in the poem, the first time after the line: "Let us go and make our visit" and the second time, after the line, "Before the taking of a toast and tea." So the target of both Twain's and Eliot's Missourian sensibility would seem to be the pseudo-sophisticated talk of culture to which the tourist is subjected or subjects himself.

Ricks might even find support for his view in the "new" Twain evidence. Eliot chose to call his hero "Prufrock," which happens to be the name of a wholesale furniture dealer in St. Louis. It is reasonable to argue that in Eliot's view the Prufrocks of the world would react to repeated talk about Michelangelo in European rooms with boredom and impatience, even if the conversation were informed and brilliant.

The alternative identification of Prufrock, at least in part, with Eliot himself complicates the story further. For Eliot, unlike Twain, wrote that he "felt himself to be more a Frenchman than an American."

I consider the explication of these lines of the poem to be interesting in itself. Like Mr. Kramer, I find it difficult to believe that on one reading of them Eliot could be shown to be prejudiced against women and that on another, Kenner, Ransom, and Gardner could be shown to be prejudiced against Eliot.

More generally, as Ricks is suggesting, the reading of this passage does demonstrate some of the difficulty in ascribing prejudice to T.S. Eliot, as the author of the poem. The voice that refers to the talk about Michelangelo could be a Missourian tourist Prufrock expressing exasperation like Mark Twain's innocent abroad or it could be the ironic alter ego of a young "expatriating" Missourian poet reacting to his immersion in European drawing rooms. Any approach which asserts that the sentiments expressed by the medley of voices found in an Eliot poem are to be taken as exhibiting the prejudices of the poet risks reductionism as literary criticism and being overly prosecutorial as an ethics of literature.

DAVID SIDORSKY
Columbia University
New York City

The Founding of Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Shabtai Teveth's reply to my letter [Letters from Readers, February] offers your readers another dose of distortions and misrepresentations but no evidence to substantiate the original charge he made in his article, "Charging Israel With Original Sin" [September 1989], that my larger aim in writing *Collusion Across the Jordan* was to provide "fresh sources of political sympathy for the Arabs, and fresh sources of antipathy to the Jews."

Having failed to discover any incriminating evidence in my own book, Mr. Teveth falls back, yet again, on Benny Morris's article on "The New Historiography" (*Tikkun*, November-December 1988) in a shabby attempt to portray me as guilty by association. Benny Morris has published a full and devastating rebuttal of Mr. Teveth's arguments in the January-February 1990 issue of *Tikkun*. For my part, I simply note that Morris's first article in *Tikkun* appeared after the publication of my own book and that he alone is responsible for the content of the article, as I am for the content of my book. Mr. Teveth's picture of a "new history" club whose members bear collective responsibility for each other's work is completely without foundation. If he wants to be taken seriously, he must treat each product of this so-called club on its own merits.

Lest this sound as if I am trying to distance myself from Benny Morris, let me hasten to add that I consider his book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, to be an outstandingly

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original, fair-minded, and important work of scholarship and that, in my opinion, Mr. Teveth's allegations about this work are preposterous and worthless. Mr. Teveth, instead of referring me to something I have written, refers me to the last paragraph in Benny Morris's 1988 *Tikkun* article, which he never tires of quoting. Here Morris expresses the hope that the new history "may also in some obscure way serve the purposes of peace and reconciliation between the warring tribes of that land." The use of the word "also" clearly indicates that Morris does not regard the promotion of peace as the only or even primary purpose of the new history, but as a possible side-effect. What is not clear is why Mr. Teveth finds this sentiment so threatening and objectionable.

Mr. Teveth rounds off his reply to my letter with the remark that in pointing out my faults one could go on and on. I feel similarly about his contribution to the debate on the founding of Israel, but I have not been allowed the space to do so. On one thing, however, I can put his mind at rest: I do not regard him as disqualified from participating in this debate. What I said was that as a partisan in the ongoing debate between the "old" and "new" historians, Mr. Teveth is hardly the best judge of the state of play. Walid Khalidi is also a partisan in this debate and so am I. We all have an equal right to engage in this debate. The reason I referred to Khalidi in my book as "the eminent Palestinian historian" is because this is what I consider him to be. Mr. Teveth gives the quotations from Khalidi as an example of the "defective evidence" on which my book is based. It is not for evidence, however, that I turn to Walid Khalidi in my book but for a clear statement of the Palestinian point of view on some of the issues in dispute about the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Should I need a clear statement of the orthodox Zionist point of view, I would now have the benefit of Mr. Teveth's article in COMMENTARY.

Mr. Teveth confuses elementary courtesy with an attempt to dictate who is qualified and who is not to participate in the debate about the events surrounding the establishment of the birth of Israel. It is customary, at least in Britain, to say something about the individuals you mention in your writing even if they are your opponents. This is why in my account in the *Economist* on the symposium held last April at Tel Aviv University on the War of Independence, I described Mr. Teveth as "a distinguished journalist and biographer of David Ben-Gurion." Mr. Teveth and I remain divided on virtually every point raised in my last letter. But perhaps Mr. Teveth will now at least have the grace to admit that he is unable to produce any direct evidence to support his suggestion that my aim in writing *Collusion Across the Jordan* was to provide "fresh sources of antipathy to the Jews."

AVI SHLAIM

St. Antony's College
Oxford, England

SHABTAI TEVETH writes:

Avi Shlaim's exculpatory letter, for the most part, speaks for itself, and relieves me of the unrewarding task of covering with him the same ground again, at a slower pace, which a fuller response must entail. He stands by his right, so it seems, to be judged solely by the merits of his book, intimating that I should not have overstepped the confines of a routine review. But I need go no further than Bruce Maddy-Weitzman in the April issue of *Middle Eastern Studies* (where the interested reader can also find my page-by-page analysis of Benny Morris's book). *Collusion Across the Jordan*, he wrote in conclusion, "should most certainly be read, but with great care and only in conjunction with other works on the subject."

All that is left for me, then, is, first, to congratulate Mr. Shlaim on acquiring such good manners. One would have thought he could have benefited more from Reading and Oxford, yet his pride on becoming an Englishman is understandable if only by the sheer magnitude of his accomplishment.

And, second, to wonder: was I not absolutely clear in pointing out that Mr. Shlaim's guilt, as he puts it, was by collaboration—his and Morris's common defense at Tel Aviv University in April 1989 and its tainted account by Mr. Shlaim in the *Economist*—and not only by association? I have already made known my distaste for Morris's and Shlaim's habit of labeling contemporary historians as "new," "old," "revisionist," and "orthodox." But, for argument's sake, if I am representative of "the orthodox Zionist point view," why doesn't Mr. Shlaim count Walid Khalidi as an orthodox exponent of the PLO's? After all, I have never held public office or been a member of a political party, while Khalidi, besides being an "eminent historian," is a declared member of the PLO establishment, and one of its recognized spokesmen. Mr. Shlaim does not contest the fact that Khalidi is quoted at great length in his book, "for a clear statement of the Palestinian point of view on some of the issues in dispute," he says. But why indeed hasn't Mr. Shlaim equally quoted an orthodox Zionist historian on the same points, if only for good measure?

Mr. Shlaim's letter leaves little room for doubt that he shares Benny Morris's politics of history, as stated in *Tikkun*, namely, that "the new history," of which Mr. Shlaim is a formidable evangelist, "may also in some obscure way serve the purposes of peace and reconciliation between the warring tribes of the land." Promotion of peace is never, on the face of it, threatening or objectionable. But—considering that nothing is apolitical in this world—is this promotion the task of the historian, even as a "side-effect"? Would Mr. Shlaim have also endorsed historians in favor of Arab transfer, just because they claim, as indeed they do, that transfer may best serve the purposes of peace and reconciliation?

Finally, Mr. Shlaim demurs to admit openly the conceptual bond between him and Morris, as if it were a shame, and chooses instead "guilt" to describe the effect of what he considers an unfair evaluation of his political prejudice. Is solidarity with Morris not just as worthy of his pride as are his good manners? This seems to be the only question left unanswered in an exchange which has long since exhausted itself.

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How to Save Free Trade—and Still Trade With Japan

Irwin M. Stelzer

It is almost half a century since the great and the good of the postwar Western world forged a new economic order, based on the belief that a regime of liberalized trade would increase human welfare. The British, as is their habit, claimed the credit, in a bit of doggerel that the economist Jagdish Bhagwati of Columbia University calls "the characteristic arrogance of the metropolitan elite toward the ex-colonial *nouveaux riches*":

In Washington Lord Halifax
Once whispered to Lord Keynes:
It's true *they* have the money bags
But *we* have all the brains.

But more dispassionate observers credit the Americans with insisting on a liberal trading order, and creating the institutions necessary to its implementation. Among these was the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), an institution responsible for overseeing progressive reductions in world tariffs. Bhagwati estimates that successive GATT negotiation rounds saw the average U.S. tariff decline by about 90 percent between the end of World War II and the conclusion of the Tokyo round in 1979.

The question of the parentage of the postwar liberal trading regime is more than one of national ego. If, as seems to be the case, only American economic might could be the driving force behind the creation and maintenance of such a system, a reversal of American policy may well be the only thing that can bring it crashing down. If Britain were to abandon its historic support of free trade, the world's economic policy-makers might shrug—if they even noticed. If Japan clings to its protectionist ways, the world economy is likely to roll on, only slightly diminished. But if America, with an economy as large as Japan's and Germany's combined, and imports equal to the total of those two former Axis allies, were to opt for protectionism, world trade would surely slow. America, the only country powerful enough to father the current liberal trading order, is thus probably also the only one strong enough to strangle it.

Irwin M. Stelzer is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and U.S. political and economic columnist for the (London) *Sunday Times*. His article, "A Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe?," appeared in our January issue.

Economists may know less than they would wish about the effects of changes in macroeconomic variables such as interest rates, exchange rates, and taxes. But they do know that expanding world trade results in gains in income and economic welfare. Trade is, after all, nothing more than the exchange of goods between consenting adults: both feel enriched by the exchange, or they would not engage in it. And the efficiency gains are obvious: if the Japanese produce cars more cheaply than we do, we conserve our resources for other uses by buying their cars instead of making our own. And that remains true whether or not they, in turn, buy from us the products we produce more cheaply than they do.

So it comes as no surprise to economists that the postwar era of trade liberalization coincided with one of the longest periods of sustained prosperity the world has ever known. Between 1950 and 1973 (after which non-tariff barriers to trade, among them "voluntary" limits on exports of steel and autos, came into play) world income grew at an annual rate of a bit under 5 percent, and world trade at an annual rate of almost 7 percent. To say that growth in trade was the sole cause of this prosperity would be foolish. But it would be equally foolish to deny that liberalization, and the consequent growth in trade, allowed countries to specialize in those goods that they could most efficiently produce, and to exchange those for the efficiently produced goods of other countries, and that such efficiency gains contributed to income growth.

For one thing, studies done by organizations such as the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Kiel Institute, and the World Bank all support the view that trade liberalization contributes to improved living standards. For another, the evidence of one's eyes tells the same story: compare the economies that walled themselves off from the flow of world trade with those that plunged into the world economy—Eastern Europe and much of Latin America on the one hand, and the United States, Western Europe, and Hong Kong on the other.

Still, no litany of economic facts and data can sustain a policy that is widely seen as producing "unfair" results. Prime Minister Thatcher is learning in Britain that the Treasury theoreticians who

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preached the advantages of a per-capita tax are no match for a simple photo of an impoverished pensioner paying the same tax as the local lord. And tight supply-side logic counted for less in America's tax-reform debate than the simple demonstration that some millionaires who paid no income tax at all would be made to contribute at least something to the federal coffers when their "loopholes" were replaced by lower marginal rates. In debates over public policy, equity matters as much as, or more than, efficiency.

Therefore, defense of the free-trade regime with statistics showing its welfare-enhancing results is useless in the face of tales of trading partners' restrictionism. In this context, that means Japan, a mighty exporter loath to allow its consumers to participate on the buy side of the world trading economy. American construction firms cannot bid for business in Japan unless they can demonstrate prior experience there, but cannot get the requisite experience unless allowed to bid. America makes the most efficient fighter plane in the world, the FSX, but the Japanese refuse to buy it. Nor will Japan buy cheap American-grown rice. And the list goes on.

So-called "revisionists" like Karel van Wolferen* suggest that Japan's drive for a larger and larger share of world markets is unlikely to slow, that the very structure of Japanese society and government makes a change in Japanese behavior unlikely, and that the Japanese simply are not like us: they play by a different, often inscrutable, set of rules. Conversion of Japan into a state more like our own, van Wolferen concludes, "would require realignments of power akin to those of a genuine revolution."

Another member of the revisionist school, James Fallows, takes a similar line. He points out that Japan is unable or unwilling "to restrain the one-sided and destructive expansion of its economic power" and, like Japan-bashing Congressman Richard Gephardt, cites Japan's unwillingness to buy the FSX fighter even though the cost is lower than the homemade alternative. The reason, according to the Japan *Times*, is that to buy American would be "tantamount to eventual abandonment of that [aircraft] industrial sector." (Similar attitudes in America would not have done much for Japan's consumer-electronics industry.)

Yet the Bush administration's trade negotiators seem to feel that Japan *can* be persuaded to change its ways, and in a direction that will make "them" more like "us." Hence, two of the concessions extracted by the U.S. from the Japanese at the latest negotiations over fundamental barriers to increased trade (the Structural Impediments Initiative, or SII) were agreements to encourage banks to extend the operating hours during which automated bank-teller machines are available, and to shorten the work week of some of Japan's civil servants to forty hours, which "will encourage curtailing work hours in the private sector." These steps will presumably enable them to spend more while working less, thereby becoming more like us.

In addition to these trivial items, Japan agreed to:

- Strengthen antitrust enforcement so that cozy domestic cartels will find it more difficult to exclude U.S. firms;
- Speed up its patent-approval process, so that Americans will no longer have to wait decades to introduce new products to Japan;
- Enact legislation to permit the construction of supermarkets, supposedly more likely to put U.S. goods on their shelves than are small mom-and-pop stores;
- Stop delaying customs clearance, a process now so time-consuming that perishable goods often rot on the piers;
- Boost public spending, thereby sucking in more imports;
- Change tax policies to open more land to commercial and residential development.

America's Trade Representative and chief negotiator, Carla Hills, called the agreement a Japanese commitment "to remove barriers to trade." Others are not so sure. To skeptics, this pact is merely the latest in a series of promises, doomed to be ignored as soon as Congress turns the heat down. They may be right—for two reasons.

First, Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu may not be able to deliver the necessary implementing legislation. He has tried desperately to present these measures as being in the interests of Japanese consumers, who pay the price for his country's protectionist policies. (Toyotas cost $15,000 more in Japan than in New York, and Sony televisions 2.5 times as much.) But the vested interests opposed to much of the new agreement have already swung into action.

No sooner was the ink dry on the trade deal than Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) called a press conference to explain just how limited Japan's new commitments are. And the Finance Ministry, traditionally opposed to increased public spending of the sort agreed to by Japan's negotiators, has not retreated from its adamant opposition to the promised stepped-up outlays on roads, bridges, and other construction projects.

Perhaps even more important, organizations speaking for some 1.6 million small retailers have vowed to prevent the building of supermarkets. Retail reform is "out of the question," says Katsuichi Yamamoto, a retailers' representative. He and his colleagues have two powerful weapons: they are important supporters of Kaifu's Liberal Democratic party (LDP), and they have the backing of local authorities, who can pass legislation nul-

* *The Enigma of Japanese Power: People and Politics in a Stateless Nation.* See the review by George Russell in the September 1989 COMMENTARY.

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lifying changes rammed through at the national level. Furthermore, small farmers, extraordinarily influential in the LDP, have already attacked Kaifu's plans to raise taxes on urban farmland (rice is still grown in Tokyo) so as to encourage commercial development.

Second, even if Kaifu can get the enabling legislation he needs, it is not certain that it will go far enough to be meaningful. For example, all the general promises about stricter antitrust enforcement seem to come down to one specific: the enforcement staff of Japan's Fair Trade Commission will increase from 129 to 154 persons. Unless these 25 new bureaucrats are among the most vigorous the world has ever seen, and are willing to fly in the face of a long tradition favorable to cartels and market-sharing, a major increase in opportunities for foreign competitors seems unlikely. So, too, with promises to step up public spending: it is highly improbable that Japan will raise the current level, 6.7 percent of GNP, to anything like the 10 percent the Americans have in mind.

In short, the agreement is unlikely to lead to much of a change in America's $50-billion annual trade deficit with Japan. Hajime Ota, director of international economic affairs at Keidanren (the trade association representing Japan's big businesses), said, "We support these talks, but there isn't going to be a substantial increase in imports from them." As usual, he blamed America: "American businesses are not yet prepared to export products that Japan wants."

This latter view is pervasive in Japan. But if Japanese businesses do not want American supercomputers and satellites, Japanese contractors do not want American wood products, and Japanese consumers do not want American agricultural products, why has Japan found it necessary to erect so many barriers to their importation?

The truth is that even without this deal, Japan's current account surplus has been declining—from $77 billion in 1986 to $64 billion last year, or from 4.5 percent of GNP to 2.2 percent. But that drop came before the recent sharp decline in the yen. The Japanese are widely reported to be unhappy about the decline, allegedly because it may make Japanese goods cheaper in world markets, and cause the country's trade surplus to reverse course, and start rising again. But consider another possibility—that Japan is secretly pleased with the recent decline in the yen, precisely *because* it will increase the attractiveness of the country's exports.

Of course, given the climate of world opinion, the Japanese dare not be seen to be devaluing their currency deliberately. But as the Germans point out, an earlier and sharper rise in Japanese interest rates would have stemmed the yen's decline. This the Japanese chose not to do, all the while claiming that the drop in the yen, while deplorable, was beyond their control.

Whatever its explanation, the fall in the yen may be more powerful in increasing Japan's trade surplus than its agreement with the Americans will be in reducing it. When that fact, and the general toothlessness of the recent agreement, become more widely recognized, America's protectionists will reemerge, angrier than ever. President Bush will then have to find still another way of "keeping the animals at bay," to use the colorful phrase of an official in his studiedly colorless administration.

Certainly, the "animals" will overwhelm the free traders, whose belief in unilateral economic disarmament may make good economic sense, but is politically unsustainable. The economics are simple: if the Japanese choose to rely on high-cost homemade products rather than on more efficient American-made alternatives, why should we retaliate by denying ourselves their well-priced, low-maintenance automobiles? The political answer is that tit-for-tat is more appealing to most people than turning the other cheek, and is a kind of direct descendant of "Don't tread on me," a proudly held American position.

Holding the pole opposite to the unilateralists are the protectionists, generally *dirigiste* Democrats who would not only retaliate quickly and hard against any Japanese trading restrictions, but would also protect any industry injured by foreign competiton.

Somewhere between the unilateralists and the protectionists lie the reciprocalists. These are the people who built the post-World War II trading regime, realizing that unilateral economic disarmament was politically not viable, and that protectionism would involve huge economic losses. Their chosen instrument was, and remains, GATT, with its emphasis on reciprocity. In brief, GATT provides that a country injured by the tariffs or subsidies of another nation need not turn the other cheek. Rather, it is permitted to retaliate in a measured way against a like quantity of the GATT violator's goods—in fact, if not in theory.

Such retaliation has many virtues. For one thing, it is a political safety valve, permitting the steam that builds in response to trading atrocities of the type for which Japan is justly famous to blow off in ways that do not bring the entire world trading system down. For another, retaliation—resorted to just often enough to make it a credible threat—can induce one's trading partners to think twice before erecting their own trade barriers. Even that revered apostle of free trade, Adam Smith, conceded just such a virtue to retaliation:

> There may be good policy in retaliation . . . , when there is a probability that they will procure the repeal of the high duties or prohibitions complained of. The recovery of a great foreign market will generally more than compensate the transitory inconveniency of paying dearer during a short time for some sorts of goods.

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But Smith was careful to add that it is difficult to judge whether such retaliation will have its desired effect. That judgment, he said, would have to be made by "that insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called a statesman or politician. . . ." If the politician guesses wrong, he (or she, in the case of U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills) will merely have inflicted still another injury on the nation's consumers.

Smith's warning notwithstanding, threats of retaliation have become the cornerstone of U.S. trade policy. That policy is set forth in the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988, primarily in "Super 301," a provision designed to combat "generic or systemic" trade practices that restrict U.S. access to any nation's markets.

Enacted by a Congress distraught over America's continuing trade deficit, Super 301 requires the President to list the most egregious of our partners' unfair trading practices. This triggers twelve-to-eighteen months of negotiations between the U.S. and the offending nation. If the issue is not resolved, the law requires the President to take retaliatory action—unless he can find a good reason (national security would be one) for not doing so.

Trade practices by Japan (refusal to open its markets in supercomputers, satellites, and wood products), Brazil (tariffs and piracy of intellectual products such as patents and copyrights), and India (restrictions on investments) earned those three countries a place on Bush's early hit list.

Adam Smith would be relieved to know that such toughness paid off. South Korea and China made important market-opening concessions in order to stay off the American retaliatory list. And the Japanese consented to a round of negotiations because they felt it necessary to seem willing to promise to take a few market-opening steps (distinguish "promise" from "deliver"). The strategy worked: Japan avoided designation as an unfair trading partner on the new list of such culprits.

But those eager to preserve and extend the free-trade regime are less comforted by the American experience with Super 301. One reason is that, by using Super 301 rather than the established GATT complaint procedures, the Americans are setting themselves up as "judge and jury of their own case," according to Frans Andriessen, the European Community's trade minister. Another reason is that the essence of the world trading system is multilateralism. Among the few things that economists can demonstrate convincingly is that a series of bilateral trade deals will produce less efficiency, wealth, and growth than will multilateral market-opening measures. Hence the bilateralism of Super 301 can undermine the opportunity to reap the greater advantages of expanding multilateral trade.

To protectionists, of course, the retreat from GATT's multilateralism to Super 301's bilateralism is not progress enough. Their reasons for wanting to take steps to protect American industry from foreign competition are couched in terms of protecting infant industries; saving jobs; national security; and reducing foreigners' accumulations of American dollars, used by them to "buy up America." A word about each worry.

Infant industries: This is the hoariest of justifications for protectionism. If only an industry is protected for a brief period, the argument goes, it will develop sufficient skills and scale to become competitive with its international rivals. The logic seems impeccable, but is not. For if an industry merely needs time to mature and become viable, the capital markets will provide the funds, just as they do to cover start-up losses of any enterprise. Better to have entrepreneurs, who must put their money on the line, choose businesses that can grow and prosper than to turn the job of picking winners over to government bureaucrats with no direct stake in the outcome. Besides, protected industrial infants have a way of remaining as much in need of permanent protection as overly protected human infants. Somehow, the protected infant never matures sufficiently to be weaned away from the "temporary" tariff protection.

Jobs: There is little doubt that tariffs or other import restrictions can save specific jobs. When the automobile industry put pressure on President Reagan to stem the rising tide of imported Japanese cars, he caved in, and persuaded the Japanese to introduce a Voluntary Restraint Agreement (VRA), limiting their exports to 1.68 million cars. There is little question that this import restriction saved jobs in the auto industry. But it did so at an annual cost estimated by the staff of the Federal Trade Commission at $240,000 per job saved, and by the U.S. International Trade Commission at a price add-on in 1984 of $1,300 per vehicle imported from Japan.

Similar restrictions on steel imports are estimated by the Federal Trade Commission staff to have cost consumers $113,622 per year, per steel-industry job saved. Worse still, the International Trade Commission found that job losses in steel-using industries offset the 20,-22,000 steel jobs preserved; because of higher costs, those industries saw their export markets shrink.

National security: The argument for curbing imports to protect national security centers on fears that supplies of some strategic material might be cut off in an emergency. Oil is the most frequently cited example, as an alleged consequence of which we have at times restricted imports in order to encourage domestic production. Yet economists have demonstrated that a policy of strategic storage plus diversification of foreign supply sources is generally a far cheaper way of protecting security than protectionism.

But national-security arguments cannot always be dismissed out-of-hand. This is especially so

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with Japan, as one of its most popular politicians, Shintaro Ishihara, joined with Sony's Akio Morita to remind us. In their *The Japan That Can Say "No,"* available in English only via an underground copying system, Ishihara and Morita contend that Japanese-made semiconductors are necessary to assure the accuracy of nuclear missiles. Ominously, they then warn, "If . . . Japan sold chips to the Soviet Union and stopped selling them to the U.S., this would upset the entire military balance."

Whether this is more than the rattling of a samurai sword it is difficult to tell. Morita withdrew his name from the projected English-language version of the book, and Ishihara came to America to convince Congressmen with whom he met that he meant no harm. But little in Japan's history suggests that its threats can be taken lightly, or that its kindness to adversaries is to be relied upon. So we cannot exclude national-security concerns from the arguments supporting selected protectionism, although such protectionism must be applied with care, and only when other risk-reducing strategies are not cost-effective.

The selling of America: Because the issue of dependence on foreigners is so sensitive—especially in a country in which Independence Day is the leading holiday—it is important to view foreign ownership in some perspective. Keep in mind, first, that figures showing America to be a large debtor nation are, in part, an accounting fiction. Americans acquired their foreign holdings years ago, when asset values had not been much affected by inflation, and we carry them on our books at original acquisition cost. Foreign purchases of American assets, on the other hand, are more recent—and hence are carried on *their* books at relatively inflated values. Using stock-market data to measure capital appreciation, and adjusting both American and foreign investments to reflect that appreciation, the Morgan Bank economists reckon that America has some $500 billion *more* invested in foreign assets than foreigners have invested in American assets.

Remember, too, that foreign holdings in the United States remain small by international standards. In most industrial countries, foreign-owned capital comes to about 10 percent of the value of all goods and services. In the United States that figure is only about 7 percent. And foreign firms employ only 3 percent of American workers and own less than 1 percent of American land.

These facts notwithstanding, the fear that continuing trade deficits give foreigners, especially the Japanese, the dollars with which to buy up America remains one of the driving forces behind protectionism, the allure of which is increased by two other factors. The first is the obvious political one: the people whose jobs are threatened by foreign competition see that threat clearly, and are often well-organized to protect themselves. The consumers, who pay for the protection of those workers, are not organized; and, in any event, each feels only a bit of pain, and may not know its source.

The more enduring reason for politicians', especially left-wing politicians', love affair with protectionism is that it is the logical extension of their gloomy views about the state of the American nation. Culminating in Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, this gloomy view begins with the assumption that America's efforts to meet its overseas commitments are draining its resources, and that the consequence of diverting funds to these imperial objectives from education, health care, research, infrastructure, and the like has been to sap American competitiveness. So dire is the patient's condition that he must be protected from foreign competitors until such time as his competitiveness can be restored.

YET thanks to the recently published work of the economist William Baumol and his colleagues*—and they are not alone—we can now say with some confidence that productivity growth in America is not declining, and that our sons and daughters are not doomed to flip hamburgers or sweep floors in Japanese-owned factories.

On the basis of a wealth of statistical evidence, Baumol concludes that "growth in productivity of our manufacturing continues high, and is, perhaps, even somewhat above the historical rate of expansion." As for comparisons with our international competitors, Baumol finds that "the absolute productivity level of U.S. labor in general, and in manufacturing in particular, continues to be the highest in the world," although the gap is narrowing as technology transfers from the leader (us) to other countries benefit the latter countries and create the prospect of "shared prosperity." As the *Economist* recently pointed out, it still takes a Japanese worker an hour to produce what his American counterparts can turn out in just 31 minutes.

Nor is it true that America is "deindustrializing." Nothing in the data suggests that we are at risk of losing our place in the world to other countries who are stealing our industries. The fact is that the relative importance of services in the economy is growing (although not in real terms) more slowly in America than in any industrialized country for which data are available, with the sole exception of New Zealand. While the percentage of America's labor force in service industries grew 10 percent (1965-80), Japan's increased by 31 percent. Indeed, Baumol points out that U.S. industrial employment is actually *rising* relative to that of other industrial countries as a group.

But productivity is only one area in which America, by popular myth a laggard, remains the Hertz of nations. Although 48 percent of Amer-

* *Productivity and American Leadership*. See the review by Melville J. Ulmer in the May COMMENTARY.

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icans recently told a pollster that they thought Japan's economy was bigger than America's, it is in reality about half the size, with a GNP of $2.8 trillion compared to our $5.2 trillion. Estimates by the Central Intelligence Agency and several international statistical-gathering organizations put Japanese per-capita income at 75 percent of ours, about the same as West Germany's (this will drop to about 65 percent when reunification occurs). True, Japan has been growing more rapidly than we have, and if that disparity continues it will surpass us in per-capita GNP at the start of the second quarter of the next century. But projecting growth rates that far ahead is a chancy, if not a silly, exercise.

Leaving aside the question of whether it should matter at all to us if we are Number 1 or Number 2, and rising above the plethora of economic statistics on the subject, we come to the key question: do Americans live better than Japanese, by the usual tests of well-being used by ordinary folk? Stated differently, do we indeed want to be more like them?

Americans on average get to consume 60 percent more than their Japanese counterparts, $12,232 per capita compared with $7,623, according to the OECD. Americans have more automobiles, telephones, television sets, and doctors per capita than do the Japanese. The average floor area per dwelling in America is 1,450 square feet; in Japan, with more people per household, it is 60 percent of that. The average Japanese pays dearly for restrictions on imports of agricultural products: 22 percent of his consumption outlays go for food and beverages, compared with 13 percent in America. And his average commute to and from work is three hours—4½ times as much as that of an American worker. Add to that a six-day work week, and few public amenities (New Yorkers have ten times as much public green space as do Tokyo residents), and you hardly have a picture of an Oriental Eden—or a model to which Americans should repair. Tales of $20 glasses of orange juice, $11 movie tickets, $100 haircuts, and multi-hundred-dollar steaks in Tokyo make for amusing chatter at New York cocktail parties; they are the reality of life for the Japanese.

Why, then, all the fuss about becoming more like Japan? Mainly it reflects a tendency to confuse the end of what Joseph S. Nye, Jr., calls "the World War II effect"* with secular economic decline. Almost all the data offered to support the thesis that America is fading fast compare our current relative economic position with what it was in 1950. Yet while comparisons of 1950 with 1990 have a neat decadal cadence, they are terribly misleading. Alone among the world's major economies, ours was not devastated by World War II. Indeed, the American economy grew stronger during the war, and immediately thereafter. Our relative position in 1950 was an anomaly. So when we hear that America's share of world production slipped from about one-third to about one-quarter between 1950 and the 1980's, we should keep in mind the more important facts that one-quarter was our approximate share in the mid-60's—and in 1938, and even in 1900.

Most people find these statistics startling. After all, they see with their eyes more and more Hondas, Sonys, and Nikons, and fewer Chevrolets, Motorolas, and Kodaks. But that is partly because Japan's export success is in the very visible area of consumer products while America's export achievements are less visible to the naked eye. The U.S. remains the world's leading exporter of aircraft, industrial and agricultural chemicals, office and computing machines, and engines, and is second in electrical machinery, plastics, and drugs.

This is not to deny that America has been running a substantial trade deficit with the rest of the world, and most particularly with Japan. But the first is declining steadily relative to GNP, and the second is less relevant than managed-trade advocates would have us believe. Economists have long recognized that a bilateral trade balance tells us little about the strength of the economies of the trading partners. We might run a permanent deficit with, say, Middle Eastern oil-producing countries, because they have oil we need, and their sheiks need only a few of our Cadillacs, or 747's. But that hardly makes Saudi Arabia a world power, or America a second-rate one. So, too, with Japan. We might permanently run a deficit in our trade with that country, while at the same time running sufficient surpluses with other countries to achieve overall balanced trade.

Even so, it is unlikely that our politicians can permit our annual trade deficit with Japan to remain stuck at $50 billion. The reason is simply that Americans correctly see the competition between the countries as unfair: a relatively open, free-trading, and competitive America vying with a closed, protectionist, and cartelized Japanese economy.

Take the case of patents. Japan feels it recently made a major concession by rewarding Texas Instruments (TI) an important computer-chip patent. But Americans feel that it took the Japanese, who routinely receive hundreds of American patents within about eighteen months of the date of application, a bit long to act: TI had applied for the patent on February 6, *1960*. During the twenty-nine-year period in which the patent application was pending, Japanese chipmakers paid no royalties on about $20 billion of annual sales in their country. And the patent is not retroactive.

Nor is there any hint that the grant of this one patent is a portent of things to come. Several patent requests by Bell Laboratories in the fiber-optics field have been pending in Japan for over ten years.

* In *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. See the review by Elliott Abrams, beginning on p. 56.—Ed.

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The sense of unfairness is compounded by the fact that the Japanese use the dollars won in the unfair trade contest to buy American assets. Americans are not particularly upset when Britain uses its fairly earned dollars to buy the President's preppy clothier, Brooks Brothers, or almost all the leading advertising agencies on Madison Avenue. But when Japanese interests buy downtown Washington and Los Angeles, Phoenix resorts and Hollywood studios, Americans feel cheated.

All this presents American policy-makers with a real dilemma. If they do impose duties on Japanese products, they raise the cost of those goods to American consumers. Buy if they tolerate Japanese intransigence in pursuit of the textbook advantages of free trade, they may create overwhelming problems in the long term. Some of those will be political: Congressman Gephardt and his ilk will intensify efforts to sell protectionism. Other problems will be economic. After all, a continuing massive trade deficit would drive down the dollar, increase both interest rates and inflation, and could eventually bring on a recession. So would the trade war that might result from retaliation.

The pressure to act comes not only from politicians and from the revisionists, but from a new school of economists who have abandoned what MIT's Paul Krugman characterizes as "one of the touchstones of professionalism in economics"—the belief that international trade benefits a country whether it is "fair" or not. For a variety of theoretical reasons, and aided by models newly borrowed from the cognate field known as "industrial organization," these economists can now make the case that there are conditions under which a country can improve its welfare by imposing judiciously selected restrictions on imports.

But even if correct, the new school of selective protectionists would have to be able to determine, in each industry, whether and by how much costs would come down as domestic output expanded in response to protection; how foreign competitors would react to such protectionist measures; and how the benefits of protection would compare with its costs, some of them unforeseeable. To implement managed protectionism, they would then have to find government bureaucrats capable of absorbing this information, predicting its consequences, and fending off special-interest pleadings to tip protectionist measures this way or that.

A profession that cannot decide whether higher interest rates dampen inflation by cutting demand, or increase inflation by raising business costs and the federal deficit; whether a falling dollar does more good by stimulating exports than it does harm by stimulating inflation; and whether a tax cut will increase or decrease total tax revenues—such a profession should show a bit of humility when facing the daunting task of designing exquisitely accurate trade barriers.

THREE conclusions suggest themselves. First, policies aimed at transforming Japan into an island America, or America into a somewhat larger Japan, are doomed to failure. Whatever else one thinks about the revisionists, a fair reading of their combined scholarship supports the conclusion that Japanese society is so different from ours, its system of governance so opaque, and its elite bureaucracy so resistant to change, that a policy based on forcing it to change is doomed to failure. And whatever else one thinks about America, one cannot help believing that urging Americans to aspire to Japanese standards of living and patterns of work is equally foredoomed. We may want the Japanese to be more like us, and they may think the world would be a better place if we were more like them. But such forced cultural convergence is just not in the cards.

Second, simple adherence to the economists' consensual program of free trade, unilateral if necessary, is politically infeasible. We may all wish we were the economic version of good Christians, capable of turning the other cheek in the face of Japanese trade practices, but we are not. It may be counterproductive to react to Japan's refusal to allow America to compete in markets in which we have superior products and know-how—satellites, aircraft, agriculture, financial services—but react we will.

Third, protectionism is a non-starter. Notwithstanding the new school of selective protectionists, the economic arguments against protectionism are simply too powerful, the historical experience showing the linkage between expanding trade and economic welfare too clear, and the costs to consumers and unprotected industries too great. We are simply not going to give up cheap, well-made cars, VCR's, TV's, and other consumer products to satisfy our blood-lust for revenge against Japan's policies. Gephardt did not, after all, make it to the White House.

So we are left with the middle ground between pure, unilateral free trade and protectionism—the policy of reciprocity which underlies GATT and which has encouraged an almost tenfold increase in world trade since 1950. This policy satisfies at least some part of the politician's need to be seen to deliver "equity," and some part of the economist's need to keep trade as free and open as is possible in a real world of competing economic and political interests. Applied as a policy instrument aimed at the elusive goal of freer trade, rather than at mere revenge, reciprocity can be an important deterrent to protectionism. Hence, despite its reliance on Adam Smith's "insidious and crafty animal, . . . [the] politician," it remains the best hope.

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On the Scarcity of Black Professors

Abigail M. Thernstrom

DERRICK A. BELL of the Harvard Law School has announced that he will be teaching classes next fall but refusing any pay. Unless, that is, the school appoints a female black to a tenured professorship. The law school now has five black faculty members but all are male. Professor Bell contends that male teachers are role models only for male students. Black women, he declares, need black women teachers.

Jesse Jackson, leading a supportive rally at the law school, has placed Professor Bell in the company of Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela. But no other member of the Harvard faculty, black or white, has joined in what Bell has called his "sacrificial, financial fast." On the other hand, whites are evidently not expected to. Whites, it seems, act and think differently. And blacks who fail to grasp that difference "look black" but "think white." Or at least that is how Professor Bell has described his four black colleagues at the law school—colleagues who are unwilling "to take risks for what they believe."

Randall Kennedy is among those who look black but allegedly think white. He is on the appointments committee and contends that the law school is making a good-faith effort to find both minority and women faculty. (Nearly half the appointments in the last ten years have been either black or female.) But the particular pool from which the school is drawing its black appointments is very small. Blacks have come to the law schools in large numbers only relatively recently. Moreover, the best and brightest among the black students, with few exceptions, choose to become practicing attorneys. A Ph.D. in English is a qualification only for a university job; a top law graduate can earn over $60,000 per annum after only three years at law school—twice the pay of a starting assistant professor who is likely to have spent at least twice as many years getting a Ph.D. In fact, the prestige and pay of a position in a Wall Street firm are likely to appeal especially to black students, relatively few of whom come from wealthy or socially secure families.

ABIGAIL M. THERNSTROM is the author of *Whose Votes Count? Affirmative Action and Minority Voting Rights* (Harvard University Press). Her article, "Bilingual Miseducation," appeared in our February issue.

The law school's contention that it is looking but not finding is not accepted by Professor Bell and his allies. In their view it is looking for the wrong sorts of people—candidates with "upper-class-based qualifications." "Gucci" candidates, another Boston-area law professor has styled them, or candidates with "brand-name" credentials: a J.D. from an elite law school, a clerkship with a federal judge, perhaps a stint at a prestigious firm. "They want people like themselves, or what they wanted to be," Bell has said. The alternative he proposes is more "flexible" criteria.

THE drama that is being played out at the Harvard Law School is but one scene in a lengthy play. The larger story involves almost all institutions of higher education in America. Across the nation, universities and colleges are looking hard for minority faculty. An American Council on Education survey, released last summer, indicated that eight out of ten schools were making some sort of effort to hire more minority professors; 30 percent said they were making "a lot" of effort.

To cite only a few examples: in 1988 the University of Wisconsin laid out a five-year plan to increase its minority faculty and academic staff by 75 percent. Duke University has pledged to add one minority faculty member to every department in 1993. By state law, 30 percent of all new faculty in California community colleges must be minority, and, in an effort to meet that goal, the colleges hold "affirmative-action job fairs." Wellesley College has already approved the taking on of five additional minority faculty members over the next five years and is considering a requirement that each department hire a minority-group member when it next makes an appointment. Yale has committed itself to a five-year plan to recruit minority professors and is financially prepared to meet the competition from other schools. Other schools are also reaching deep into their pockets, making extraordinary offers, and suspending normal search processes—grabbing almost anyone they can find. Minority candidates are often hired even when there has been no advertised job opening. These appointments are called "targets of opportunity."

Some of the schools that have come up with five-year plans and the like are genuinely com-

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mitted to "diversifying" the faculty. Others are simply deflecting political pressure: protests or threatened protests or task-force reports written to head off potential protests have been behind much of the action. But whatever the motive, the hunt for minority faculty is on—in great universities and small rural colleges alike.

The chances for success, however, are slim. Extravagant goals can be set; they are unlikely to be met. Or rather, they are unlikely to be met unless schools are willing to fill their minority quotas entirely with Asians. The reason is simple: the demand is great and the supply very limited. Thus, where blacks in particular are concerned, even the most prestigious schools are often coming up empty-handed. The Afro-American Studies Department at Harvard, created in 1969, is down to one tenured professor—and he is white, though not for lack of trying to hire a black. Three offers went out this year to black scholars; none was accepted. And of course Afro-American Studies is not the only department engaged in a search; at least in theory, everyone at Harvard is in on the act. Yet today the number of blacks who are permanent members of the faculty of arts and sciences is smaller than it was in the years 1976 to 1979.

The picture is much the same elsewhere. Take the University of Wisconsin. For it to meet its stated goal, it must not only add 70 minority professors over the next three years; it must also retain those minority faculty members it already has, which will not be easy. Indeed, in the first year of its five-year plan, it added eighteen new minority professors but lost even more to other schools.

BUT where did these institutions expect to find new recruits in such large numbers? In analyzing the problem, it is useful to focus on blacks, since most of the attention has centered on them.

In 1988, according to an authoritative report of the National Academy of Sciences, approximately 16,000 doctoral degrees were awarded to citizens of the United States by American universities. (This figure does not include degrees in education, business administration, and related subjects that are not part of the curriculum of most liberal-arts colleges.) This Ph.D. pool is obviously the prime source of new faculty members for our more than 3,000 institutions of higher learning.

How many of the new Ph.D's in 1988 were received by American blacks? If blacks were represented in proportion to their numbers in the population, the figure would be about 2,100—or 12 percent. The actual number is less than 400—357 to be precise. Which is to say that a group comprising 12 percent of the population got 2.2 percent of the degrees.

Moreover, here are some (by no means all) of the major research and teaching fields in which there was not a single black Ph.D. in the entire country: astronomy, astrophysics, botany, oceanography, ecology, immunology, demography, geography, European history, classics, comparative literature, and German, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic languages and literature. Then there are the fields where the score is not zero but so close to zero that it might as well be. Of the 608 Americans receiving Ph.D.'s in mathematics or computer science, there were just two blacks. Of the 496 in earth, atmospheric, and marine sciences, there were another two.

Perhaps even more startling than the absence of blacks completing their scholarly training in a science, or in a field involving some remote language or culture, are the figures for the social sciences, where black doctorates are disproportionately concentrated (if we can speak of disproportionate concentration when the numbers involved are so small). Of the 158 black Ph.D's in the social sciences, well over half (96) were in the single field of psychology, which left a mere 62 spread thinly through economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science, each of them disciplines of obvious relevance to an understanding of race relations. Nineteen hundred and eighty-eight yielded a grand total of five new anthropologists, eleven economists, seven political scientists, and fourteen sociologists who were American-born blacks.

What about American history, which of course includes the field of Afro-American history? The total was just *five* blacks for the entire nation—fewer than the number of American historians at many relatively small colleges. (Students and concerned faculty often argue that schools that *really care* will at the very minimum employ a black scholar to teach Afro-American history. Where will they find them?)

Discouraging as these numbers are, they are getting worse. Between 1978 and 1988 the percentage of degrees awarded to blacks declined by almost a quarter (23 percent). Preliminary figures for 1989 Ph.D.'s have been released by the National Research Council (NRC), and the picture looks much the same as in 1988. "I'd classify the minority situation as a disaster," a member of the NRC staff has remarked.*

Are schools making an insufficient effort to recruit black graduate students? Clearly not. With Mellon Foundation help, nineteen colleges and universities are putting in place programs to entice black (and other minority) undergraduates to enter certain Ph.D. programs; the benefits of participation include an offer to repay college loans up to $10,000. From the moment black (and,

* All these numbers would be slightly larger if one were to include West Indians, but many proponents of "diversity" want only American blacks counted. Only they serve as real "role models," these people say.

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again, other minority) students arrive at Tulane University they are encouraged in a variety of ways to choose an academic career. At a Pennsylvania conference on graduate-school opportunities in February, the 400 minority students in attendance, most of them black, left with the promise of full-tuition scholarships if they chose to seek an advanced degree at any school in the state. Organizers of the conference plan to hire a counselor to assist the students in applying to graduate programs. Harvard rolls out a red carpet for all black and other minority graduate students, providing full financial support, regardless of need. Bill Cosby's children would be eligible for full support.

THE pool of potential applicants to graduate schools of arts and sciences is so small in part because academically successful black undergraduates—like their counterparts in law school—are not generally interested in an academic career. They go on to more lucrative and prestigious careers. Again, blacks are not more avaricious than whites, but they come from poorer backgrounds. Even when their families have incomes comparable to those of middle-class whites, they do not have comparable assets (the average assets of white families are eleven times those of black families).

Yet even if the level of interest in graduate education were high, the pool would still be small. For the number of blacks who are graduating from college with successful academic records in relevant fields—records that suggest they are well-prepared to do graduate work—is not large.

Perhaps the main reason is—to put it simply—that colleges are taking in black students who are not prepared to meet the college's academic demands. And students who do poorly in college are obviously poor candidates for graduate-school admission.

As a recent American Council on Education survey found—confirming what many have sensed simply by looking around—the vast majority of colleges are attempting to increase the number of minority students on campus. Of the 370 colleges and universities that responded to the survey questionnaire, only 17 percent said they were making no effort to increase the number of minority students, and only 22 percent said they had not expanded financial support for minorities. Such financial aid can be quite extraordinary. Every black freshman who enters Florida Atlanta University next year, for instance, will receive a scholarship that amounts to free tuition for all four years. The school claims that it is doing only what the market demands—that colleges and universities across the country are recruiting black students with offers of financial assistance.

Many schools have ill-disguised quotas that favor minority candidates. In California there are eight white high-school graduates for every black, yet there are only four whites for each black admitted to UCLA or UC Berkeley—the flagship schools. Black high-school graduates are therefore twice as likely as their white classmates to be found at UCLA or Berkeley. And indeed, the black admission rate is double that of whites. That would obviously make sense if the test scores and grades of black applicants were superior to those of whites and Asians. But the opposite is the case. Among California's black high-school graduates, only 4.5 percent meet the admission standards of the state's system. Blacks, in fact, have the lowest eligibility rate of any group. At Berkeley, the average 1987 combined SAT score for blacks was 952, which put them (on average) only in the 6th percentile compared to whites and Asians. In other words, 94 percent of Asians and whites got better test scores than the average black freshman.

Schools are not only eagerly enrolling minority students; they are working hard to retain those who come. But the record is not good in this area, either. Here are some figures for high-school graduates who entered four-year institutions in 1980—when admission standards for minorities were higher than they are now: while 52 percent of those who were white received bachelor's degrees by 1986, black graduation rates were roughly half of that number. And here are the precise figures for the UC Berkeley class of 1987: while 71 percent of the whites and 67 percent of the Asians received their bachelor's degrees by 1987 or 1988, the rate of completion for blacks was 37 percent (for Hispanics it was 43 percent).

In short, if universities and colleges are having a hard time finding blacks to hire, it is because too few blacks are receiving Ph.D.'s to meet the demand. Not many black students find an academic career enticing, but, equally important, a high percentage of blacks admitted to the colleges from which future Ph.D.'s come are unprepared for the work required, with the consequence that the dropout rates are high.

TO BE SURE, others tell a different story. The pool of black Ph.D.'s may be small, but why, they ask, must professors have a doctorate? In any case, the indictment continues, those institutions of higher education with the most prestige and money—places like Harvard—could certainly find people of color if they wanted them. Yet the graduate faculties of arts and sciences—like the law schools—are allegedly applying the wrong standards in recruiting and promoting minority faculty. Carolivia Herron, an assistant professor in Afro-American Studies at Harvard, has recently complained that the administration there refuses to understand that minority faculty think that writing books is "boring." But if Harvard remains so misguided as to demand evidence of scholarship in the form of (boring) books, other schools are apparently more enlightened. Nine of them offered Professor Herron posi-

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tions, and she is going to Mount Holyoke with tenure.

As for the low level of black success in college, other explanations abound. Black students are not doing well because, according to a member of the Duke faculty, they must "fight against the prevailing suspicion about their competence." (If true, that would be an argument against affirmative action.) Another frequent suggestion is that they are dropping out because of the "resurgence of bigotry" on campus. A third contention is that, as Reginald Wilson of the American Council of Education puts it, "there's a statistical relation between blacks on campuses [i.e., black faculty] and success of black students." Hire more black faculty, and black students will get better grades.

Here we come to the role-model argument that lies at the heart of much that is said on the need for "diversity" (and that Professor Bell of the Harvard Law School has simply taken one step further): blacks need blacks, just as women need women. (And Catholics, Catholics?—they too are in short supply in universities.)

Admittedly, there is a small element of truth here: black students have needed to know that blacks can teach—that scholarship is not something only whites can do. But that point is certainly well-established by now, and it should not be permitted to obscure a larger one. Role-model proponents seem to think of modern education as the equivalent of a medieval apprenticeship. They apparently believe that you attach yourself to a master—an older version of yourself whom you hope one day to replace—and learn through a process of identification. They miss the main point about modern and open societies: that they allow people to identify not simply with those who look like them or speak like them but with the universe of humanity.

Role-model proponents also miss the point that books are the keys which open the doors to that larger world. Our sense of ourselves and our understanding of the world can and does expand in encounters with writers—and teachers—with whom we seem to share little. They may look different and speak in a different tongue; we may even suspect that we would not like them, were we to be introduced. But good books fashion bonds among seemingly dissimilar people, and surely one role of the teacher is to help the student gain access to such books.

There is also much talk about the need for more role models in our elementary and high schools, where the poor performance of so many black children naturally affects the size of the pool of college-bound seniors, as well as of those who go on to good graduate schools and from whose ranks minority scholars must be drawn.

Nationwide, half of all black children attend school in an inner-city district. Take Boston, which is pretty typical of inner-city school systems. In Boston, four out of ten students drop out before twelfth grade; particularly high are the drop-out rates for black males. This year, an estimated 40 percent of the seniors were not expected to pass an eighth-grade reading test that had been made a graduation requirement. The school committee canceled the test.

In the last six years, Boston has bought new textbooks, instituted new programs, and added dozens of teachers, many of them black. Still, there has been virtually no improvement in reading- or math-achievement scores since 1984. In almost half the elementary schools in the city, all but four of the middle schools, and all but one of the non-exam high schools, student scores rank among the lowest 25 percent in the state. Thus, almost a third of the sixth-graders who took a basic reading test in 1986-87 failed it (or else either could not complete it or did not take it during the three-week period in which they had a chance to do so). Furthermore, black scores are significantly worse than white, and the gap between the two groups is growing. In 1984 white students scored between 12 and 20 percentile points better than black students in all grades in reading. In 1988 the gap widened to between 17 and 25 points.

At the college level, too, there is much in the way of "reform." In California, such a high percentage of black and other minority students in the state colleges and universities are failing to graduate that there is talk of moving into what we might call a second stage of affirmative action. To this end a bill, authored by Tom Hayden of 60's fame, has been passed in the California State Assembly—and is now under consideration in the Senate—that would institute a two-track system of student admissions, one based on merit and the other explicitly on race and ethnicity. And although the bill's language is somewhat ambiguous, it seems to ensure for that second track not only admission but academic success—equal graduation rates.

In addition to addressing the question of minority student representation (in the freshman and graduating classes), the Hayden bill also concerns itself with faculty quality. On the assumption that drop-out rates reflect a university atmosphere hostile to minority aspirations, the bill stipulates that all segments of public higher education in the state would "be expected to establish programs to promote racial and cultural sensitivity and understanding in instructional and counseling programs, including the consideration of efforts to promote this sensitivity and understanding in the evaluation of faculty and other instructional staff. . . ."

But if, in the hiring and promotion of faculty, evidence of an effort to promote "racial sensitivity" would have to be taken into account, the Hayden bill does not specify what would constitute insufficient effort on this front. Can whites

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ever meet the requisite standard of sensitivity and understanding? What about those black scholars who "think white"?

The direction in which California may be heading is not unique. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, which is an accrediting agency, now defers certification if a school fails to measure up in terms of minority faculty recruitment, minority student retention, and racial atmosphere. Too many minority drop-outs, too few blacks on the faculty, too much racial tension, and (as Baruch College in New York has discovered) the school will have its accreditation put on hold. In many schools the process of internal monitoring is enough to keep the pressure up. Affirmative-action officers often have the power to scrutinize closely all proposed appointments. In fact, such personnel are now sitting in on job interviews, questioning candidates for a position in history, say, with an eye to their views on racial matters.

The truth is that none of these measures will touch the core of the problem: the poor academic performance of black students at every level. And only when that picture changes will the size of the pool of black Ph.D.'s greatly enlarge.

Nevertheless, all is far from hopeless. In part, change will have to come from blacks themselves. For instance, too many black students think of good grades as "white"—a problem that blacks themselves are beginning to talk about. But institutions of higher education can themselves play a constructive role—not, however, by justifying policies that amount to an acceptance of a racial double standard; and not by changing the curriculum, grading faculty on a racial-sensitivity scale, establishing sensitivity workshops, or fashioning racial-harassment codes. These only debase scholarly standards, promote censorship and self-censorship, and trigger white resentment.

What universities and colleges *can* do—and what some are already doing—is to get involved in education at the level at which it really counts for black students. This means linking up with high schools, tutoring inner-city students, and running special summer programs.

Perhaps the most exciting such program is the one being put in place in Chelsea, Massachusetts by Boston University. The university has been invited to manage the public-school system for an experimental ten years, and it plans not only to alter the learning and teaching environment in the schools themselves but also in the home. The program includes adult literacy training, seminars on parenting, classes for teenage mothers to teach life-coping skills, and pre-natal health care—all of which will help students come to school ready to learn. In sharp contrast to gestures like Derrick Bell's, the efforts of Boston University and other such institutions are rays of hope in a largely bleak scene.

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A Talmud for Americans

Edward Alexander

WHAT is a Shas? Readers of the daily press who have followed accounts in recent months of the sordid bargaining of Israel's small political parties may reply: an ultra-Orthodox Sephardi political party whose six Knesset members brought down the government of Yitzhak Shamir in March by abstaining in a vote of confidence. Religiously observant Jews are far more likely to reply: Shas is an abbreviation of the two Hebrew words for "six orders," that is to say, the six major sections into which the 63 tractates of the Mishnah (the first written summary of the Oral Law, ca. 200 C.E.) and the Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah) are divided, the two together, Mishnah and Gemara, making up the Talmud.

Who among enlightened Jews a century ago could have predicted that in the Zionist state of Israel in 1990 a "Talmud party" would make and unmake governments? For that matter, who could have imagined that in April 1990, 20,000 Jews would gather in New York's Madison Square Garden to celebrate the completion (*siyum*) of all 2,711 folio pages of the Talmud in a method of study called *Daf Yomi* (daily page)? Smaller commemorations were held in Israel and in Europe of this ninth completion of the cycle since the practice was synchronized in Vienna in 1923 in the hope of keeping Talmud study alive in the modern era.

Between dying and dead, the novelist Isaac Bashevis Singer has said, is a long way in Jewish history. Singer was referring mainly to the fate of the Yiddish language, but he might have said the same of the study of Talmud. Modern Jewish writing, from the mid-19th century onward, is full of accounts of rejection of the Talmud by Jews advancing (or was it withdrawing?) toward Emancipation and Enlightenment. In many a Yiddish story, a son's rebellion against his father and the world of his fathers will begin sartorially and tonsorially, with a shortening of his jacket and hair, proceed to a shortening of his memory, and culminate by his hiding a short French or Yiddish novel in the folds of a huge volume of the Talmud that he is (apparently) studying.

Singer himself recalls, in an autobiographical tale called "Guests on a Winter Night," how his older brother Israel Joshua (later, as I.J. Singer, also to become an eminent Yiddish novelist) revolted against the traditional piety of their father. "Joshua had become enlightened . . . he refused to study the Talmud. . . . How much longer were [the Jews] going to study the law concerning the egg that was hatched on a holiday? Europe, my brother said, had awakened, but the Jews in Poland were still in the Middle Ages." It may well be the voice of his dead older brother that we hear in all those Singer characters who complain that (as the hero of his novel *The Slave* puts it): "One law in the Torah generated a dozen in the Mishnah and five dozen in the Gemara; [and] in the later commentaries laws were as numerous as the sands of the desert. . . . If this continued, nothing would be kosher. What would the Jews live on then? Hot coals?"

Israel Joshua Singer died young, in 1944, but he lived long enough to see that it would have been far better had Europe remained asleep. European "enlightenment" terminated in a new dark age, compared with which the era of talmudic ascendancy among the Jews had indeed been an age of light. The secular wisdom that had enraptured Jewish enlighteners looked good in fair weather but not in foul. As another eminent Yiddish writer, Chaim Grade, said: "There came in the West a booted ruler with a little mustache, and in the East a booted ruler with a big mustache, and both of them together struck the wise man to the ground."

Grade had witnessed the 1939 occupation of Vilna by the forces of the ruler with the big mustache. But on September 1, 1943, the forces of the ruler with the little mustache surrounded the ghetto of Vilna. Their aim was to remove the remaining few thousand Jews to the death camps. The Jewish resistance fighters, unable to find sand in the ghetto to make the sandbags needed for defense, resorted to Jewish books for the purpose. These existed in abundance in a city long known to East European Jews as the Jerusalem of Lithuania because of its great scholars and educational institutions. Among the latter was a 200-year-old library whose director, a *maskil* (enlightener), hanged himself rather than witness the destruction of his books by the Nazi conquerors.

But this last director of the Vilna Jewish library "was wrong," wrote Abba Kovner, commander of

EDWARD ALEXANDER is professor of English at the University of Washington. His most recent book is *The Jewish Idea and Its Enemies* (Transaction Books).

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the Vilna resistance fighters and later to become a distinguished Hebrew poet in Israel.

> On that morning of 1943, I gave the order to collect the remaining books and to use them to provide cover for the fighters. . . . There were the classics, in the original and in translation. There were the avant-garde Yiddish poets, but their books were too thin and in soft covers. There were also the books of Sholem Aleichem, who taught us to laugh with one eye and cry with the other. The central pillars, however, were the great volumes of the Talmud in their brown leather binding. Only a few blocks away [at the publishing house of Romm] the Talmud had been printed continuously for the last 150 years.

In 1975, thinking back, Kovner claimed to see in this episode a revelation of the true meaning of "life in writing," *hayyim she-bi-khtav*, the only phrase in classical Hebrew that signifies literature. So far from being, as some of its detractors called it, the Book of the Dead, or what yet another great Yiddish writer, I.L. Peretz, called "the Diasporal rope that winds from generation to generation around the Jewish neck and throttles and almost chokes him out of his breath," the Talmud epitomized *hayyim she-bi-khtav*. Certainly in Vilna, the great volumes of the Romm edition of the Talmud had preserved life, if not exactly in the way envisioned by the talmudic sages from 30 B.C.E. to 500 C.E.

I was reminded of Kovner's story about the volumes of the Talmud as "the central pillars" of Jewish self-defense by the very first sentence of Adin Steinsaltz's introduction to his recently published reference guide to the study of the Talmud.* "Just as the Bible is the foundation of Judaism," writes Steinsaltz, "the Talmud is the central pillar supporting the entire spiritual and intellectual edifice of Jewish life."

This belief in the Talmud as the distinguishing mark of Jewish existence is very old, among Christians as well as among Jews. According to an ancient midrash, all the nations might at some time in the future claim that they too were Jewish: "Then the Holy One, Blessed be He, will say: he who holds my mystery in his hand, he is truly Israel. And what is this mystery?—it is the Mishnah." The Hebrew Bible may have been "converted" by the imperial Christian intellect into the "Old Testament," but the Talmud remained incorrigibly Jewish, as recalcitrant and unswallowable as the Jews themselves. "No Jew," insisted the Christian jurist-scholar Johannes Reuchlin in 1510, "has ever been baptized who has understood the Talmud or has even been able to read it." Perhaps this is why the Popes, starting in the 13th century (and often urged on by Jewish apostates), ordered the burning of the Talmud, and why milder, Protestant regimes amended and censored it.

But enlightenment, secularization, and modernity proved far more potent than Popes and censors in separating Jews from the Talmud. I hope I am not guilty of impropriety in offering myself as an illustration of how far Jewish life in this country has drifted from talmudic foundations. In the Orthodox school that I attended as a child in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, on weekday afternoons and Sunday mornings, we studied Hebrew, Yiddish, Humash (Bible), but not Talmud except insofar as we heard tales (which I much enjoyed) of the great talmudic sages like Hillel, Shammai, and especially Akiva. My only exposure to Talmud came once a year, on the morning before the first Passover seder, when, at the behest of my grandfather, I would rise at an ungodly hour of the morning to attend a *siyum* (the completion of study of a tractate of the Mishnah) in order to be exempted from the fast that is otherwise incumbent on first-born sons on that day.

Later, as an undergraduate English major at Columbia, I of course came upon many ignorant, offensive, and ridiculous allusions to the Talmud. These ranged from Marx's assertion that capitalism is nothing other than the Talmud rewritten in the "real" language of the Jews, which is neither Hebrew nor Yiddish but "haggling," to the solemn pronouncements of literary critics about the "talmudic" complication and layers of meaning in any work of more than ordinary complexity written by a Jewish novelist.† Ignorant though I may have been, one thing I did know was that talmudic learning could not be acquired genetically, and that Jewish writers who had never turned a folio of Talmud could hardly be "talmudic" in their lucubrations or style.

Like many other students of English at Columbia in the 50's, I was familiar with only one example of serious criticism arising from Talmud study. This was an essay on "Wordsworth and the Rabbis" by the great critic Lionel Trilling, a professor at Columbia. Originally a lecture given at Princeton in 1950, it claimed that the reason for Wordsworth's "unacceptability" (then) was precisely "a Judaic quality" that ran counter to the sensibility defined as modernism. Trilling said that he himself, despite being infected by modernism, had responded warmly to Wordsworth because of his (Trilling's) intimacy with the mishnaic tractate *Pirke Avot*, or "Ethics of the Fathers," as it is usually rendered in English. In an engaging yet highly strained argument, Trilling asserted a "pregnant similarity" between the rabbinical understanding of the Law and Wordsworth's un-

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* *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition: A Reference Guide.* Random House, 323 pp., $40.00.

† A typical example of this genre is provided by the egregious Gore Vidal. Complaining (in the *New York Review of Books*) of the depredations visited upon the purity of the English language, Vidal offers the following explanation of why Jewish writers such as Bellow, Malamud, and Roth *appear* to be dealing with ideas: "They arrived post-James. Jewish writers over forty . . . comprise a new, not quite American class, more closely connected with ideological, argumentative Europe (and talmudic studies) than with those of us whose ancestors killed Indians, pursued the white whale. . . ."

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derstanding of Nature. Torah for the rabbis and Nature for Wordsworth were surrogates of God, really divine objects "to which one can be in an intimate passionate relationship." Moreover, the sages whose sayings make up *Pirke Avot* are presented by Trilling as precursors and relatives of Wordsworth; Hillel in particular was "a peculiarly Wordsworthian personality."

But those of us who were inspired by Trilling's essay to browse in the Soncino Press translation of the Talmud quickly discovered that this tractate (also readily available in the daily prayerbook) is *sui generis*, distinguished from all the others because it does not deal with halakhic (legal) issues but with ethical duties. If, as John Stuart Mill maintained, Wordsworth is just the right poet for "unpoetical natures," then "Ethics of the Fathers" is just the right talmudic treatise for untalmudic natures.

MY CURIOSITY about the Talmud thereafter burned with a very subdued flame until, a few years ago, it was rekindled by two of my academic colleagues in Israel. Both belonged to that 84 percent of Israeli Jews who, according to a recent poll, have never read any of the Talmud. Neither of them had participated in a synagogue service since becoming bar mitzvah, and one of them had once stunned me by saying, in praise of a candidate for academic appointment who had a thin bibliography, that "at least he has none of that damned Jewish stuff in his articles." Now, I was shocked to hear, both had been attending lectures on the Talmud by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz of Jerusalem.

Who is the man who has been able to interest so many Jews in Israel in a work whose supposed source—namely, the divine revelation of Torah—a large proportion of them do not acknowledge? Steinsaltz was brought up in Jewish Palestine according to the tenets of left-wing socialist Zionism. The sacred texts of his early education were Lenin and Freud. But his father was not so dogmatic a secularist that he failed to see the importance of making his son a literate, if not a believing, Jew. Adin therefore was tutored in Talmud and attended a religious high school. His university work was in physics and mathematics, yet he became religious, and by age twenty-seven had decided to create a modern edition of the Talmud. The first volume of this edition appeared in 1967. It has been followed by nineteen more, published under the aegis of his Israel Institute for Talmudic Publication.

Although his intention was "not to popularize the argument or the subject matter" of the Talmud, Steinsaltz was convinced that much (not all) of the notorious "difficulty" of Talmud study (or "learning") was a matter of technical obstacles which he likened to reading a philosophical text only in manuscript composed in illegible handwriting. Consequently, he inserted the vowel marks and punctuation missing from standard editions, translated the sections written in Aramaic (most of the Gemara) into modern Hebrew, and also explained the many words from other languages that appear in the text. About a million copies of the Hebrew edition (planned for completion in about 2003) have been sold. They have earned for Steinsaltz worldwide acclaim, the Israel Prize (in 1988), and adoring followers in even the most unlikely quarters. It only needs to be added that they have also earned him the condemnation of some among Israel's ultra-Orthodox who in the newspaper published by the Shas party accused him of "heresy," and specifically of implying through his work that the Oral Law was not given with the Written Law at Sinai. (To the dismay of many Israelis, Steinsaltz responded to these attacks by admitting "mistakes" in some of his popular booklets and offering to refund the purchase price. When asked to explain what one Israeli journalist called his "almost Galileo-like recantation," Steinsaltz said: "I prefer to be considered a fool all my life than to be considered in the eyes of God a wicked person.")

STEINSALTZ'S Talmud has now begun to appear in English, for the benefit of readers like myself with small Hebrew, less Aramaic, and no ability at all to fill in the ellipses of the original text. The first two volumes, translated and edited by Rabbi Israel V. Berman and three associates, are the reference guide (cited earlier) intended for use in Talmud study generally and not exclusively for Steinsaltz's edition, and the first of the ten chapters of *Bava Metzia* ("The Middle Gate"), a tractate on civil law from the Fourth Order of the Talmud, *Nezikin* ("Damages").* The reference guide is comprised of discussions of the Talmud's "essential nature," its historical background and its make-up, Aramaic, mishnaic methodology, talmudic terminology and hermeneutics, halakhic concepts and terms, talmudic weights and measures, rules governing halakhic decision-making, and common abbreviations.

In a book of 1976, *The Essential Talmud*, Steinsaltz likened the Talmud to a living organism, a tree that has reached the stage where it is unlikely to change substantially, yet "continues to live, grow, and proliferate," endlessly producing new shoots that become part of a complex unity of leaf, blossom, and bole. This figure is graphically realized in the traditional layout of the Talmud page, with the main text running down the center of the page, flanked by the commentary of Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak, the great French commentator of 1040-1105) on the inner side of the page, and the Tosafot (additional interpretations by Rashi's 12th-century disciples) on the outer column of the page. Still farther from the trunk, at the margins of the page, are other

* *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition*: Volume I: *Tractate Bava Metzia*, Part I. Random House, 252 pp., $40.00. Additional volumes are projected, but not yet scheduled.

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exegeses of the text, references to relevant halakhic works and biblical quotations, parallel texts and cross-references, and proposed emendations (some as late as the 19th century) in the text of the Gemara.

Something of this sense of the Talmud as a great, rooted blossomer, a glorious living unity in multiplicity, is inevitably lost in the English version of Steinsaltz's edition. The page here is similar to the original in structure but not in substance or texture. The Hebrew-Aramaic text is again in the center (vocalized and punctuated and with abbreviated terms fully spelled out). To the right of the text is a literal translation into English (often, however, with auxiliary words added). On the left side, also in English, is Steinsaltz's own translation and commentary, "an integrated exposition of the entire text."

Thus, to give but one example at random, the literal translation of a brief passage on folio page 5a reads: "Rav Zera said: If the first [ruling] of Rabbi Hiyya is [accepted], he must swear regarding the rest." Across the page, Steinsaltz's translation and commentary read: "*Rav Zera said* regarding this case: *If Rabbi Hiyya's first ruling is accepted*, then in this case the shepherd *must take an oath regarding the remaining* animals, affirming that he never received them; otherwise, he must pay in full not only for the animals about which the witnesses have testified, but also for all the rest claimed by the owners. For Rabbi Hiyya ruled (3a) that . . . ," and so forth, for another ten or so lines of explication.

Underneath the literal translation is Rashi's Hebrew commentary, not translated. Near the bottom of the page is a Notes section, which often includes allusions to or summaries of the interpretations of those commentators who appear in the original but no longer speak for themselves here. At the margins of many pages are items of background information, occasionally with drawings. At the very bottom, which some readers will deem the least and others the most important position, is the section on halakhah, the law. This explains the links between legal decisions and the text under consideration.

Steinsaltz has been accused (sometimes by the selfsame critic) of "presumption" in substituting himself for the classic commentators and of timidity for not going beyond the literal meaning in his commentary. A more generous view would be that Steinsaltz is a self-effacing commentator whose learning is everywhere, his "personality" nowhere. This self-restraint has enabled him to convey the drama of a vibrant dialogue carried on through generations of scholars, as real and living today as ever it was. If we grant his starting assumptions—that much of his English readership knows exactly nothing of the Talmud, and that "the vast majority of concepts discussed throughout the Talmud are not defined in the Talmud itself"—his decision to replace the classic commentators with disinterested explanation of these concepts is perfectly reasonable.

But what is the point of this interminable debate? The first chapter of *Bava Metzia*, called "Two are holding," has as its ostensible purpose the determination of the law that should obtain in circumstances where two people claim ownership of the same found object. An important topic, no doubt, and one whose principles of argument may be applicable to issues that press urgently upon the Jewish people today. But once the legal determination is made, once the halakhic decision is final, why, one might ask, go on through centuries of hair-splitting and logic-chopping? One reply is that the real point of the Gemara and the commentaries on the Gemara is the cultivation of the intellect as an end in itself. But if the only purpose of talmudic debate is intellectual calisthenics, then Jewish mental athletes might just as well take their exercise on profane texts as on sacred; philosophy (in which, Steinsaltz claims, the rabbis were not interested) will serve as well as Torah.

The answer to this question can only be that God is pleased by the sinewy logic of these strenuous debates because the solution of theoretical problems ultimately strengthens the commitment to, and belief in, the religious law of Judaism. Steinsaltz has written that the Talmud is "the only sacred book in all of world culture that permits and even encourages the student to question it." The talmudic practice of preserving minority opinion, rejected arguments, doctrines that have proved fruitless—a practice that to the mind of a zealot may seem inconsistent with the search for truth—might in fact be said to be the only stable foundation for a just reliance on the *victorious* doctrine or interpretation, the very condition that justifies acting upon it. It is as if no truth could be anything more than a dead dogma unless it contained its own opposite, that is, unless the possibility of refuting it continued to exist. To quote the rabbis, "Both are the words of the Living God, and the decision is in accordance with the House of Hillel." The Talmud's moral poise is evident in its recognition that one must ask about every ancient opinion that issued from a sage not only, Is it true? but also, What is the meaning of it?

For Steinsaltz himself, study of the Talmud is a useful rather than a liberal exercise: questions of detail are crucial to him because they may determine his own place in the world to come. But he is aware, perhaps too much so, that for many of his prospective readers (if one can be said to "read" the Talmud), such study will be liberal rather than useful. In his treatment of halakhah there is an ambivalence that seems to derive from his desire to produce a Talmud that will, as the clothing manufacturers say, "fit all sizes." His potential students, he knows, will vary widely not only in linguistic and mental capacity, but in willingness to obey any authority higher than their own minds, any moral law external to themselves.

The effects of Steinsaltz's ambivalence are ev-

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erywhere apparent. Thus, in the *Bava Metzia* volume he says that "the solution of halakhic problems, and in particular the findings of definitive halakhic rulings, is not the main purpose of the Talmud." Yet in newspaper interviews he has said of his edition, more sternly: "I would like people to study it. I would like even more for people to obey it." Again, in *The Essential Talmud* he refers to knowledge of the law as an end in itself rather than instrumental to observance; but immediately afterward he cites, with apparent approval, the talmudic dictum that he who studies and does not observe what he studies would better never have been born.

In his introduction to the reference guide (which should prove a tremendous help to Talmud students at every level), Steinsaltz is more direct, writing that "the Talmud's purpose is to seek out the exclusive Torah connection with any given subject." The truth of Talmud, then, is for him the truth of Torah, of which Talmud is a part. Yet this too is problematic, for in working one's way through *Bava Metzia*, a neophyte like myself, noting a certain paucity of references to Scripture, which is after all the final ground of Jewish religious authority, will often have the feeling that Steinsaltz takes for granted what is at issue.

What, then, *is* the relation between the written Torah, the Hebrew Bible, and the oral Torah, or Talmud? The Mishnah itself remarks in one place that "the Sabbath laws, the laws of holiday offerings and sacrilege are like mountains hanging by a hair, for they contain little scriptural support, but many laws." In *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* (1982), a summary of his prodigious, virtually heroic work of the previous decade on the Mishnah,* the American scholar Jacob Neusner states the problem with admirable precision: "Formally, redactionally, and linguistically, the Mishnah stands in splendid isolation from Scripture." Mishnah, Neusner maintains, "is not simply a secondary expansion and extension of Scripture. The Mishnah is a construction, a system, formed out of an essentially independent and fresh perspective. Only after coming to a full expression was it drawn to pertinent Scripture."

This distinction underlies Neusner's conception of the ancient Mishnah as a model "city of the mind" that replaced a no-longer-accessible earthly Jerusalem after it was destroyed in 70 C.E. by the Romans. Perhaps one can say, however, that his metaphor of an intellectual Jerusalem and Steinsaltz's metaphor of the Talmud as a living organism do not really contradict each other in the end. There is order in a classical temple, but there is order of another kind in a forest.

ALTHOUGH I can imagine that some learned Jews who pick up Steinsaltz's Talmud will feel that its author is addressing them as if he were a patient schoolmaster in an idiot school, most readers will be grateful to him for having succeeded in what he set out to do: namely, remove the "technical obstacles" to Talmud study. Thanks to Steinsaltz, anyone who wishes to take the trouble to do so can now begin to acquaint himself with the Talmud.

Yet when in the 11th century Rashi produced a commentary on the Pentateuch that could be understood by ordinary people, he could be confident of the effectiveness of his pedagogy among readers who were pious. Steinsaltz faces a very different situation. He can remove from Jewish shoulders such burdens as mastering Hebrew and Aramaic. But in religious matters it often happens that the lighter a burden is made, the heavier the remainder is to bear. People who fast twice a week have less difficulty fasting than those who do it once a year. People who attend synagogue every morning do so with less effort than those who turn up thrice a year.

The English historian Macaulay once wrote, in praise of a work of biblical exegesis called *Paradise Lost*, that "the most wonderful and splendid proof of genius" is a great poem produced in an enlightened age. A commentary on the Talmud as a whole was an impressive achievement in the ages of faith; it will be an extraordinary one in this age of doubt, in which one's reputation for intelligence usually increases in direct proportion to the degree of one's disbelief. In his *Invitation to the Talmud* (1973), Jacob Neusner remarks that "Before modern America, it is difficult to find a Jewish community so remote from the classical sources of the faith of Israel as that found in this country." That remoteness is spiritual as well as intellectual. It forces us to ask whether a work that purports to regulate every detail of daily life—cooking, eating, praying, washing, lovemaking—can find an abiding place in the mental world of people for whom the very notion of moral restraint is often repudiated as a violation of privacy.

Can Jews reenter a vast religious edifice without acknowledging its source? The answer may well be no. But if, however improbably, it turns out to be yes, then we shall all be indebted to those scholar-teachers, Adin Steinsaltz preeminently among them, who, in Matthew Arnold's words, have "labored to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought . . . and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light."

* Forty-three volumes of commentary and analysis of five of the six orders of the Mishnah. In 1982 Neusner began to bring out 35 volumes of *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* (University of Chicago Press). In 1984 he began to publish, in 35 volumes, *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation* (Scholars Press).

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What the Anti-Communists Knew

Sam Tanenhaus

What you now see as a change for the worse ("Stalinism") is really a change for the better in knowledge on your part.

—Vladimir Nabokov to Edmund Wilson, 1948

The events of the past year in Central and Eastern Europe have unfolded so swiftly and with such cinematic surrealism as to have left, amid the celebration, a good deal of intellectual confusion. How can forty years of history have been erased overnight, repudiated as if by reflex? Many in the West seem to have had no inkling that the peoples of Eastern Europe, inured to the false promise of Mikhail Gorbachev's "democratic reforms," would insist instead on democracy itself, and, at the first opportunity, tear down the scaffold of Communism. Some have credited the resultant burst of freedom to Gorbachev alone, or to some hitherto unacknowledged power of renewal within the Communist system. What they have forgotten, or never knew, is that the seeds of revolt were planted the instant the Soviet imperium first sprang into being.

We can all, it appears, use a refresher course in 20th-century history, and there is no better curriculum than a number of books, testaments really, written by those who witnessed the Communist empire as it formed, intuited the shape it would take, and tried to warn us against its perils. These classics of anti-Communism were once better known, but in the last twenty years or so they have fallen into near-oblivion. Four in particular cry out for appreciation today: Friedrich A. Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*; Milovan Djilas's *The New Class*; the collection edited by Richard H.S. Crossman under the title *The God That Failed*; and Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind*.

The authors of these works all observed Communism when its prestige was great and its power ascendant. Some lived near the centers of its strength; a few stood face to face with its potentates. All aimed their urgent messages to readers in the West, where illusions about Communism were deep-seated. Each has much to tell us about the world that is ending and about the new one waiting to be born.

Of the four, *The Road to Serfdom* is probably the least known today, though it caused a stir in England and the United States when it was published in 1944, and in the 1970's and 80's, thanks to *samizdat*, it found a second life in Eastern Europe.

The historical moment in which *The Road to Serfdom* was conceived and written accounts, in part, for its special relevance today. For, like us, Hayek's readers had arrived at the threshold of a new, ambiguous era. World War II was winding down, although it was not yet over. The United States and Russia were emerging as superpowers. In England, where Hayek, an Austrian émigré, had been living and teaching as an economist for more than a decade, hard times were in the offing. There would be shortages and rations. The resurgence of the Labor party was a foregone conclusion.

This last development worried Hayek because he had noticed that British public opinion—"particularly among my friends who held 'advanced' views on social matters"—seemed curiously sanguine about the dangers of collectivism, despite the bitter examples of Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and Soviet Russia. Although many "progressives" had sobered up briefly at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939, as soon as the Soviet Union parted company with the Axis powers and joined the side of the Allies, they reverted to the fashionable belief that Communism and fascism were, as world views, diametrically opposed, one the harbinger of the shining future, the other the final gasp of the wicked past. At a time of war between them, it was distinctly unfashionable to dwell on disturbing resemblances between Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany.

Yet this is what Hayek now did. Both systems, he pointed out, were authoritarian. Both disdained "bourgeois" liberalism. Above all, both were rival forms of socialism (the word "Nazi" itself was an abbreviation of "National Socialist"), united by their "common hostility to competition and their common desire to replace it by a directed economy."

Given the enormity of the political crimes being

Sam Tanenhaus, who has written for the *New Criterion* and the *American Scholar*, is working on a biography of Whittaker Chambers for Random House.

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committed in Germany and Russia, it might seem bathetic to have singled out their economic policies for opprobrium. But Hayek did so for a reason. He wanted to locate the ideological place where Western idealism intersected Eastern totalitarianism. That place, he wrote, was incontestably their mutual enthusiasm for social planning, and specifically economic planning. For among the entire range of socialist ideals, the planned economy was the most widely endorsed and seemed most likely to become a reality in the free democracies. In the United States, planning of a sort had already been introduced via the New Deal, and England was sure to follow suit. Indeed, by the time Hayek began to assemble notes for *The Road to Serfdom*, "it was already fairly obvious that England herself was likely to experiment after the war with the same kind of policies which I was convinced had contributed so much to destroy liberty elsewhere." (In fact, Britain soon nationalized its railroads, inaugurated a national health plan, and wobbled onto the path of collectivism.)

In a key chapter entitled "Planning and the Rule of Law," Hayek pointed out that to the missionaries of the planned economy, a disinterested legal system, with its delays, its rigmarole, its hair-splitting, loomed as nothing more than an obstruction. The late 18th- and early 19th-century fathers of socialism, horrified by the furies unleashed by the French Revolution of 1789, had hoped to bottle them up by building a society that was stable, orderly, rational—and "frankly authoritarian." Freedom of thought, to them, was "the root evil of 19th-century society." They "had no doubt that their ideas could be put into practice only by a strong dictatorial government."

It was only later, as the revolutions of 1848 neared, that socialists applied to their thinking the varnish of democratic rhetoric. Labeling themselves proponents of a "new freedom," they heralded the "science" of a centrally directed economy that would eliminate social disparities. But, as Hayek argued:

> What the promise really amounted to was that the great existing disparities in the range of choice of different people were to disappear. The demand for the new freedom was thus only another name for the old demand for an equal distribution of wealth. But the new name gave the socialists another word in common with the liberals, and they exploited it to the full.

The idea of the planned economy, in sum, despite its overlay of democratic rhetoric, was inherently tyrannical, and fatally at odds with pluralism, independence, and "the basic individualism inherited by us from Erasmus and Montaigne, from Cicero and Tacitus, Pericles and Thucydides."

Hayek himself was convinced that the genuinely admirable ideal which socialists espoused—namely, equality—could in fact be attained. Not, however, through the flimflam of scientism, the pieties of universal uplift, or the coercions of statism, but through commerce—that is, competitive capitalism. In our own time, what has excited the Eastern Europeans about *The Road to Serfdom* is no doubt Hayek's jubilant depiction of the free-market economy. He wrote not only as an economist who considered it sound and just but also as a rapt student of cultural tumult. Like Whittaker Chambers, another believer in capitalism's catalytic powers, Hayek relished the hurly-burly of the free market, the social kinesis it created. It was, he pointed out, commerce that had softened the rigid class divisions of pre-industrial Europe, instilled in the poor the hope, often realized, of vaulting up the social ladder, brazenly put a price on things and thereby placed them within plausible reach of nearly everyone. Money, wrote Hayek in a remark that would have pleased Balzac, "is one of the greatest instruments of freedom ever invented by man."

This exuberant materialism has now been loosed in Eastern Europe. We see it in the entrepreneurial energies blossoming in Warsaw and Leipzig, in Budapest and Prague. Placards in Moscow read: "Socialism? No Thanks." It is more than a slogan; it is the culmination of disgust with fourteen Five-Year Plans, including the latest, Gorbachev's. An implicit tribute to the wisdom articulated by Hayek, the placards serve as a rebuke to those still-dominant elements among our own spiritual elite who remain enmired in the myth of socialism's "new freedom."

MONTHS after *The Road to Serfdom* was published, Stalin prepared to seize the nations of Central Europe, henceforth known as Eastern Europe. By 1949, with the ascendancy of Mao Zedong, the road to serfdom stretched from Berlin to Beijing.

How would these spanking new socialist states work? It was a question Hayek, in England, could not answer. But others could, and did, none more cogently than Milovan Djilas. Born in Montenegro in 1911, Djilas reached manhood in the early 1930's, a time when many European writers were trying to reconcile literary and revolutionary ambitions. Djilas did so with rare success. While an undergraduate in Belgrade, he won renown for his early poems and fiction; at the same time he joined the (illegal) Communist party. He went underground, rose to a position in the party's central committee, and, when war came, commanded partisan troops that fought the Nazis. When the air cleared, with Tito's Communist party in control of Yugoslavia, Djilas took his place in the cabinet.

So close to the action, he saw too much, and by the early 1950's began to doubt. His open criticism of party bureaucracy cost him his job and, in periods of imprisonment totaling nine years, his freedom. During this time he wrote

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memoirs, fiction, and studies of Communism, most famously *The New Class* (1957).

In this book Djilas explained exactly who had come to compose the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The greatest illusion of the Communist revolution, he wrote, "was that industrialization and collectivization in the USSR, and destruction of capitalist ownership, would result in a classless society." Instead it created (rather as Hayek had suspected) an entirely new caste—of apparatchiks, political bureaucrats. They descended from the functionaries of Lenin's reign, professional revolutionaries reared within the narrow cloister of Bolshevism, "distinguished by a special discipline based on identical philosophic and ideological views," bound by a "unity of belief." What was more, whereas "bureaucrats in a non-Communist state have political masters, usually elected, or owners over them, . . . Communists have neither."

The chief exemplar of the new class was Stalin, who possessed a gift, even a genius, for bureaucracy. Djilas met him often enough to compose a memoir about their *têtes-à-têtes* (*Conversations with Stalin*, 1968) and came away convinced that Stalin was not only a "relentless dogmatician and a great administrator" but the "lawful although wicked offspring" of the revolution, the logical successor to Lenin, perfectly cast as the guarantor of the party's hegemony. Like Hayek, and unlike many in the West to this day, Djilas maintained that the reputed Stalinist saboteurs of "true" Communism were, in fact, its dearest progeny.

With Stalin's death in 1953, the new class took on a new identity. Exhausted by purges and paranoia, it sought peace and comfort in "collective leadership." This led to the generation of potentates whose repudiation we have seen in the past year. Few (with the obvious exception of Ceausescu in Romania) were dictators on a Stalinist scale. But they were, nonetheless, powerful men, fortified (as Djilas wrote) by "one specific form of ownership—collective ownership—which the class administers and distributes in the name of the nation and society."

The brutal farce of postwar Communism appalled Djilas, although not enough to dislodge his faith in democratic socialism. Yet he was too honest and too outraged to seek refuge in the myth of a Communist Eden betrayed, or despoiled by interlopers. It was not a glitch of history that made the dictatorship of the proletariat a dictatorship plain and simple. As Stalin was the stepchild of Lenin, so Lenin had been heir to Marx, who was himself the architect not only of Communist theory but also of its ingrained dogmatism, which could brook no dissent.

Still, if this monomania contained the germ of despotism, its trespasses also inspired an opposition that could never be fully eradicated. A professional politician, Djilas saw that the "collective leadership" could amass power but not authority. The new class was insulated from its subjects and therefore also estranged from them. Writing at the apogee of the Communist empire, Djilas predicted its inevitable defeat in passages that today ring with prophetic portent. Thus: "Communist regimes are a form of latent civil war between the government and the people." And thus: "Spontaneous resistance—the dissatisfaction of millions with the everyday details of life—is the form of resistance that the Communists have not been able to smother." And, most remarkably, thus:

> Just as personality, various social classes, and ideas still live, so do the [subjugated] nations still live; they function; they struggle against despotism; and they preserve their distinctive features undestroyed. If their consciences and souls are smothered, they are not broken. Though they are under subjugation, they have not yielded. The force activating them today is more than the old or bourgeois nationalism; it is an imperishable desire to be their own masters, and, by their own free development, to attain an increasingly fuller fellowship with the rest of the human race.

"IT IS NOT difficult," wrote Friedrich Hayek, "to deprive the great majority of independent thought. But the minority who will retain an inclination to criticize must also be silenced." Alas, Hayek reasoned from first principles and not from hard evidence, for in the West it was precisely the minority schooled in criticism who led the parade to the Communist altar and tremblingly yielded up their independent thought. A skeptical student of modern liberals put the matter this way: "We are at heart so profoundly anarchistic that the only form of state we can imagine living in is utopian; and so cynical that the only utopia we can believe in is authoritarian." So lamented the American intellectual Lionel Trilling in 1948, the year the Soviets blockaded Berlin and sent tanks into Czechoslovakia. It was not the Czechs or Germans whom Trilling had in mind but his own colleagues, many of whom never quite accepted that the utopian promise of the Soviet Union had been delivered in the totalitarian form of labor camps and mass murder.

Trilling himself had briefly flirted with the new faith, but by the 1940's lost patience with intellectuals who continued to feign innocence long after the brutal shocks of the 1930's, from the show trials to the Hitler-Stalin pact, had become common knowledge. This perverse tropism did not infect "ordinary" men and women—sharecroppers and factory hands, the proletarians idealized by socialism but seldom attracted to it. Even in the labor unions, the one area of American economic life penetrated by Communists, the party scored few successes within the rank and file and had to load apparatchiks into executive positions or at the head of bogus "front" groups. It was

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literary men and women who plunged into the party's humbling ablutions.

"Why do I long for Communism? Because I believe it to be equitable and because I suffer on account of the injustices which I feel more strongly than ever when it is myself who am favored." So wrote André Gide in notes published in *The God That Failed,* an anthology of essays by six writers (in addition to Gide, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Richard Wright, Louis Fischer, and Stephen Spender) who had leaped into—and then out of—the fiery furnace. Gide's irony typified the stance of ex-Communists; in fact, irony was a motif that ran arterially through their confessions. This, plus (as Norman Podhoretz has pointed out*) the confessors' as-yet-undimmed enmity toward capitalism, lent cachet to the book when it was published in 1950. Yet as the very title of *The God That Failed* suggested, it was not irony that drove literary Communists (and fellow-travelers) to the party but, precisely, a yearning for faith. "The party became family, school, church, barracks," wrote Silone. "[T]he world that lay beyond it was to be destroyed and built anew."

These intellectual abdicators of independent thought eventually awoke to find themselves in limbo, bereft not only of their new pieties but of the old humanism which had left them, after all, susceptible to the manipulations of the party. This point would be made most eloquently by Whittaker Chambers in the statement he delivered to the House Un-American Activities Committee in August 1948 and later in his autobiography *Witness* (1952); but Chambers, a self-professed "man of the Right" and no ironist, adopted a tone of Christian penitence. Arthur Koestler, whose message about Communism hardly differed from Chambers's, struck a more palatable tone, self-mocking, almost apologetic. In a key passage in *The God That Failed,* Koestler wrote of the "lesson" taught by the Spanish Civil War and other follies. That lesson

> always appears under the dowdy guise of perennial commonplaces: that man is a reality, mankind an abstraction; that men cannot be treated as units in operations of political arithmetic because they behave like the symbols for zero and the infinite, which dislocate all mathematical operations; that the end justifies the means only within very narrow limits; that ethics is not a function of social utility, and charity not a petty-bourgeois sentiment but the gravitational force which keeps civilization in its orbit. Nothing can sound more flat-footed than such verbalizations of a knowledge which is not of a verbal nature; yet every single one of these trivial statements was incompatible with the Communist faith I held.

Perhaps the most illustrious of all contemporary Eastern European émigrés is Czeslaw Milosz, the Polish poet, born in Lithuania, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980 and has held, for nearly thirty years, a professorship at Berkeley. He first became known in the West as the author of *The Captive Mind,* an account of intellectual life in the Eastern bloc. It is one of the great documents of the postwar era and grows more illuminating with each passing year. But when it was published, in 1953, it baffled many American reviewers. Some were convinced either that Milosz was a bad writer or that he had been poorly served by his translator.

What confused them was Milosz's sensibility, which translated poetic intuitions into airtight logical arguments. This brand of verbal economy, whose highest expression is found in Franz Kafka and Robert Musil, may be peculiar to Central Europe. Today's reader of *The Captive Mind* himself becomes a captive of Milosz's mordant aphorisms and elegant mental swoops. Where one expects an indignant *cri de coeur,* often one is treated instead to something akin to Zeno's paradoxes.

An example is Milosz's reflections on the phenomenon of "socialist realism," the official literary style of Stalinism: "Poetry as we have known it can be defined as the individual temperament refracted through social convention. The poetry of the New Faith can, on the contrary, be defined as social convention refracted through the individual temperament." Were these words intended in jest, as a witticism? By no means; in fact, Milosz was taking pains to demonstrate the feature of Marxist doctrine that was most overpowering to an artist living in Communist society, namely, its precise formality. This, more than fear, was what turned artists, whose only weapon was intuition, into apparatchiks. They were not so much bullied as mesmerized.

Milosz did not apologize for writers who caved in to the party, but he tried, as few others have done, to put us in their shoes. We tend to forget that for every Joseph Brodsky, every Vaclav Havel (both of whom sat in jail cells), there were hundreds of smaller talents, equally besotted by the vision of beauty, equally betrothed to the European tradition, yet unable to resist the demands of their political overseers. The temptations were many, especially for those stranded at the base of Parnassus, for in "the people's democracies" anyone "who displays any talent is used." Indeed, "the capacity to follow the political line is a selective criterion by which the most mediocre [artists] attain the greatest renown."

But material rewards alone seldom sufficed. Pure cynics aside, most artists under Communism, according to Milosz, cultivated an advanced form of deception, sophisticated doublethink. Outwardly they embraced official dogma; secretly they tended their inner flame. It was a risky masquerade but its practitioners were filled with satisfac-

* See "Why *The God That Failed* Failed," in *The Bloody Crossroads* (1986).

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tion, even pride, at their ability to "say something is white when one thinks it black, to smile inwardly when one is outwardly solemn, to hate when one manifests love, to know when one pretends not to know, and thus to play one's adversary for a fool (even as he is playing you for one)."

Milosz likened this elaborate dumbshow to the Islamic tradition of *ketman*, developed by heretics who, in order to save their skins, concealed their true convictions from religious authorities. In Eastern Europe, he wrote, the burlesque grew into a national institution. Millions participated—not only writers but everyone who at bottom opposed the indignities of totalitarian rule.

THE world now knows just how thorough the deception was. *Ketman* was practiced so skillfully in the Eastern bloc that for two generations the commissars were fooled. Nor were they alone. In the West, many intellectuals and policy-makers had succeeded in persuading themselves that the regimes of Eastern Europe, unpleasant though it must have been to live in them, nevertheless enjoyed, or had earned, a certain legitimacy—and besides, who were *we*, with so many sins of our own, to find fault with *them*?

When, therefore, Gorbachev embarked upon his cosmetic reforms in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, he was not the only one astonished to discover that he had stumbled into a full-scale revolt. Yet he, and his Western well-wishers, should have known better. That revolt was long in preparation, as the anti-Communist writers—often to the jeers, and worse, of their fellow writers—foresaw so many years ago.

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Marshall Wexler's Brilliant Career

A Story

Joseph Epstein

In 1963 I was twenty-eight years old, a newly-minted Ph.D. in political philosophy from the University of Chicago, and spending the year as a visiting assistant professor at Harvard. Harvard was having a look at me for a tenure-track appointment in the department of government, and I was having a close look at Harvard, and was rather amazed at what I saw. I had passed my entire educational life in Chicago, in Hyde Park between 57th and 59th Streets, going as a kid to the University's Lab School, thence to the College, and then on to graduate school in the philosophy department. Intellectually, the University of Chicago was competitive and international—peppered with German refugee scholars and, as I would only later realize, not quite first-class Englishmen—but socially it didn't exist. So I was surprised at what I discovered at Harvard, where the social element, or so it seemed to me, was quite strong if not absolutely central.

This was evident throughout the university, but nowhere more so than among undergraduates, those little demons of sophistication. How different they seemed from the earnest, often rather dour, usually somewhat neurotic undergraduates at Chicago, their heavily underlined Modern Library copies of Plato and Aristotle under their arms, always ready for yet another discussion of what constitutes the Good Life. At Harvard, it struck me, undergraduates did not need to discuss the Good Life because, without anyone having to tell them about it, they knew they were already living it. What went on in the classrooms at Harvard, at least in non-scientific subjects like my own, seemed of less than primary interest to the students. At Harvard a teacher was expected to be brilliant, but above all to be fresh and entertaining, rather like a bright, charming movie. The main point is that what went on in the classroom could not have held much importance, because the most important thing in these students' lives had already happened—namely, they had been accepted at Harvard.

Joseph Epstein, whose most recent story in Commentary was "The Goldin Boys" (October 1989), is the editor of the *American Scholar* and the author of several collections of essays. His stories have also appeared in *Harper's*, *Hudson Review*, and *The Best American Short Stories*.

One of the two courses I taught during my second semester that year was Theories of Government, which met Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 9:00 to 10:00 A.M., in Emerson Hall. Some fifty-odd students were enrolled, most of them upper-classmen. I did the standard thing—I remember smiling at a *New Yorker* cartoon that appeared around this time, showing a small bald man at a lectern above the caption, "Teacher greets students on opening day of class with pleasantries"—that is, I announced the intentions of the course, passed out the syllabus of readings, explained that along with a midterm and final examinations a twenty-page paper would be required. When I had done with details I asked if there were any questions. There appeared to be none. As I was gathering up my papers and was about to dismiss the class a pudgy kid with thinning hair raised his hand.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, and there was something about that "sir" that wasn't quite convincing, "but I was wondering: on the paper and the exams, do you want us to report back your own ideas and opinions, or do you prefer us to attempt to think independently and strive for originality?"

"May I ask your name?"

"Marshall Wexler," he said.

"Mr. Wexler," I said, "I don't know if you're going to believe this or not, but I do prefer that my students think independently and strive for originality, difficult as either of those conditions is to achieve. But in your case I am going to make an exception. I want you to take very careful notes recording everything I say in this class, and I want you to bring them to me in my office every Friday afternoon, so that I can make certain you never stray onto the path of independent or original thought. If there are no other questions, then class dismissed."

For three weeks running, slipped under the door awaiting me in my office at Robinson Hall on Friday afternoon I found a cleanly typed set of notes summarizing everything I had said in Theories of Government during the past week. What impressed me was the quality of these notes. Marshall Wexler not only caught precisely what I was attempting to say in my lectures and in class discussion, but frequently, I felt, said it rather better than I. He wrote in short sentences—always

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lucid, always correct. His powers of formulation were striking; he could render a thorny conception smooth, restate a subtle, sometimes tangled notion in language straight and simple without any loss of complexity. Real evidence here, I recall thinking at the time, of a superior intelligence.

I shouldn't have minded having a set of Marshall Wexler notes for the entire course. Were I ever to give it again, these notes would probably have improved it. But after three weeks the punishment had gone on long enough, and so the following Monday before class I told Wexler that he needn't worry any longer about supplying me with notes. That afternoon, during my regular office hour, he knocked on the door and asked if I could spare him a few minutes.

"I want to apologize for my opening-day performance in your class," he said. "I don't know why I did what I did—senior-year fatigue maybe—but it was stupid and I regret it. Please forgive me."

"It's forgiven and forgotten," I said.

He was about to leave when I invited him to chat for a moment. He sat in the chair opposite my desk, let his green bookbag drop to the floor, and, crossing one leg over the other, loosed a very winning smile. This, I thought, is not a charmless kid.

"I think we're from the same city," he said.

"You grew up in Chicago, too?"

"Northside," he said. "We live at 3400 on the Drive. I went to Francis Parker. My father's idea. Most of the guys I grew up with went to Senn, a few to Lake View. But Parker was the surer route to Harvard."

"Did your father go to Harvard?"

"My father never finished high school," he said. "He came here from Poland—from Bialystok, actually—in 1933, when he was seventeen. He's done extremely well. Somewhere along the line he'd heard that Harvard was the best school in America, and so he decided that he wanted his son—I'm an only child—to go there. I think it would've broken his heart if I hadn't. Anyhow, here I am."

"How do you like it?" I asked.

"It's all right. Lots of bright kids. Everyone's got some odd distinction or other—either he's a math whiz or a state oboe champ or his great-great-grandfather was one of the founders of the Somerset Club. The great thing about going to a school with a hot reputation is that you find out how little there is behind it. It lends perspective. Also, you don't have to spend the rest of your life brooding about how much better everything would have been if only you'd gone to Harvard."

"What're you studying? What's your major?"

"I'm in history and literature," he said. "But do you know the Trilling joke about majors?"

"I don't think I do," I said.

"It's in the story 'Of This Time, Of That Place.' A student, who's a kind of bully boy, describes himself to the professor who's the main character in the novel as 'a former English major.' To which the professor asks him, 'In what regiment?' Not bad, eh?"

Marshall Wexler went on to tell me that he was one of the principal editors of the *Crimson*. He had also been working on a special research project with David Riesman. The year before, as a junior, he had read Proust in an independent tutorial with Harry Levin. For the most part, at my prodding, he talked about himself. Apart from the fact that I was sitting behind the desk, if a stranger had walked into the office at that moment he might have had a difficult time deciding who was the teacher and who the student, so much more in command did Marshall Wexler seem than I. Twenty or so minutes later when he left my office, he asked if I minded calling him Marsh. I said that I didn't, but I now wonder if he expected me to ask him to call me Ben, which I certainly did not do.

Back in Chicago early in August, I received an invitation from a Mr. Max Wexler to attend a party in honor of his son Marshall's having been awarded a Mellon Fellowship to Balliol College, Oxford, where he would be studying Politics, Philosophy, and Economics. I was a bit surprised, less by the announcement of the fellowship than at receiving the invitation. After that single session in my office Marshall Wexler and I had had no further private meetings at Harvard. He did well on both my exams and wrote a strong paper on Hobbes's *Leviathan*, all of which earned him an easy A in the course, one of three I gave that semester. But when the course was over there was no further word from him, no mention of our perhaps one day meeting in Chicago, nothing of the sort.

I'm not sure why I decided to go to the party. I was still unmarried, and my schedule was freer than it later became. Perhaps I was curious to see the Wexler kid in his own habitat. Perhaps I had nothing better to do. In any case, on a sunny Sunday afternoon I drove down from Hyde Park—I had a yellow Volkswagen bug in those days—along the Drive, past Soldiers Field, the Aquarium, the Field Museum, the lovely panorama of brightly colored sailboats tied to buoys on Lake Michigan that always struck me as awaiting painting by Raoul Dufy, over the S-curve, past the Drake Hotel and Lincoln Park, the lake a calm pellucid blue on my right all the way. I turned off at Belmont, found a parking space on Aldine, and walked over to the Wexler's apartment at 3400 Lake Shore Drive.

It was one of the grander buildings along the Drive, a building of formidable dignity and gray elegance built around the turn of the century that would not have seemed out of place in a fashionable neighborhood in Paris or Rome. The lobby had a burnished marble floor and walls

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paneled in deep walnut. There was no doorman but a tall white-haired man in the muted livery of a dark maroon jacket and black clip-on bow tie sat behind a high desk near the bank of elevators, where he had a good view of everyone entering. I told him I was here for the Wexlers, and he directed me to the ninth floor. As the elevator opened a very black woman in a nurse's uniform pushed forth in a wheelchair a small, hairless, vacantly staring little man in a light camel's-hair coat and a brown velour hat that, resting slightly askew on his head, he didn't appear to have put on himself. As I stepped in and the door began to close, I heard the man behind the desk ask the woman, "Mr. Bernstein O.K. today, Emma?"

There were two apartments on each floor. When I rang the Wexler bell a maid in black dress and white apron came to the door and informed me that the guests were in the living room down the hall and to my right. I walked along a lengthy hall, passing what felt like eight or nine doors, one of which was open and gave off into another long hall. This was one of those old Chicago apartments whose size one couldn't begin to estimate or rooms number. It was built during the days when the wealthy kept staffs of live-in servants, and so had maids' rooms, special pantries, a breakfast room, endless closets, four or five bathrooms, who knew what else. The size of the place threw me a bit, and it was only when I entered the vast living room, with its large windows looking outward to the south over Belmont Harbor, a room now holding perhaps fifty or so people, not counting five or six Scandinavian-looking women in uniform with trays of drinks and canapés, that I had a chance to grasp its extraordinary decor.

I am a son of the lower-middle class—my father owned and ran a dry-cleaning shop, we ate in the kitchen, left our shoes in the front hall in winter, and the rest of it—and so am normally not very sensitive to my environment, but this room demanded notice. A great lavenderish deep shag rug ran wall to wall; champagne-colored flocked wallpaper supplied background for a number of sizable paintings in heavy gilt frames of the fake-masterpiece kind that used to hang in the lobbies of the Balaban & Katz movie palaces in downtown Chicago when I was a kid. The furniture, of which there seemed a large quantity, so that you had the feeling of being in a showroom, was upholstered in heavy fabrics but in pastel colors; the lamps were especially ambitious. An enormous fireplace, surrounded by a dark marble mantle, was filled with a life-size brass peacock, its tail fanning out in a multiplicity of colors.

On the level of taste, this, I remember thinking, had a long way to go to get to vulgar, when someone tapped me on the shoulder from behind and I turned to find Marshall Wexler standing alongside a small, red-faced man, bald, wearing an expensive-looking dark gray suit and red silk necktie which was badly knotted and in which he did not look quite comfortable. Marshall was in standard Ivy League get-up of seersucker suit, foulard tie, button-down shirt, and plain-toed cordovan shoes, none of which seemed to go with this room.

"Professor Kaufman," he said, "may I present my father, Mr. Max Wexler? Dad, this is Professor Benjamin Kaufman, who was one of my teachers at Harvard and who now teaches at the University of Chicago."

Mr. Wexler and I shook hands. His grip was firm, his skin rough. Below the French-cuffs of his white-on-white shirt and large gold cufflinks, his hands had what looked to be a permanent grime; the nails were clipped very short; the thumbs were slightly bent back and seemed, somehow, brutal. I glanced quickly at his son's hands, which were soft and rather pudgy, though the thumbs—peasant thumbs, I thought—were similar.

"It is always a pleasure to meet one of my son Marshall's teachers," he said. He had been in this country for some thirty years but he still spoke with the accent of a greenhorn. He pronounced his son's name "Ma-shul." He was stocky, maybe 5′3″ or 5′4″, or four or five inches shorter than his son, of whom he was obviously very proud.

"It's good to meet you, too, sir," I said. "You must be very pleased about your son's winning a scholarship to Oxford."

"Very proud," he said. "But then Ma-shul has always brought his father reasons to be proud." He squeezed his son's upper arm and looked over at him admiringly.

A heavy-set man came up, in powder blue trousers, a pink shirt with long pointy collars, and a yellow sports jacket of complicated texture. He had a cigar in one hand, a drink in the other. "So how's the young genius?" he bellowed, inserting the cigar into his mouth and slipping an arm around Marshall.

"Pretty good, Mr. Mutchnik," said Marshall. "Mr. Mutchnik, this is a former teacher of mine at Harvard, Benjamin Kaufman. Professor Kaufman, this is Morrie Mutchnik, a business associate of my father's and an old family friend."

"Oh," said Mutchnik, rolling his eyes behind thick-lensed black-framed glasses, "a Haaavahd professor. I'm tremendously impressed."

"Actually, I teach at Chicago," I said.

"That ain't exactly bush-league, either," he said, removing the moist cigar from his lips. "Never went to college myself, though I had one daughter downstate and another at Rollins in Florida."

Marshall and his father excused themselves to greet other guests. Marshall said that he would appreciate a word with me—he had some questions about Oxford—before I left.

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"So tell me," Mutchnik said, "has the kid really got it? Is he really brilliant or what?"

"Near as I can tell," I replied, "he has a very good mind."

"The old man, I think, maybe truly is some kinda genius," Morrie Mutchnik said. "He came here from Poland in the early 30's, just in time to save his ass from the Nazis, a kid, alone, speaks no English, knows no one, without a pot to piss in, you should pardon my French, professor. Today he is one of the giants of our industry."

"What industry is that, Mr. Mutchnik?"

"Call me Mutsy," he said "everybody does. The scrap-iron industry, formerly and less elegantly known as the junk business. In the Depression Maxie Wexler worked for an old guy on the West Side name Warshovsky. He worked the alleys of Chicago in a wagon pulled by a horse. He hauled radiators from abandoned buildings, ripped the copper tubing from basement plumbing. Nights Maxie doubled as a watchman, sleeping in the shack in Warshovsky's junkyard. He kept his eyes open, saved a few pennies. When Warshovsky died he bought the yard, wagon, broken-down horse and all from the widow. Whatta I have to tell a smart guy like you, professor? One thing leads to another, junk leads to real estate to second mortgages to a car-insurance business to savings-and-loans to by now who the hell knows what else Maxie Wexler is into."

"Much diversified, as they say in the business section."

"Diversified? I hafta laugh. Did you know that Maxie Wexler owns the cemetery where my parents, rest in peace, are buried and where I myself, may I too rest in peace, will one day be buried? Which means that my descendants will one day be paying Maxie's descendants rent for room for my corpse."

"You're in the scrap-iron business yourself?" I asked.

"Almost but not quite. I own the industry trade journal. *Scrap Iron Age* it's called. What can I tell ya? It's a good living. It's also how come I've got the lowdown on Maxie Wexler and the other large-scale operators."

"Is there a Mrs. Wexler?"

"Rose Wexler died seven, maybe eight years ago. Bone cancer. Not a nice death. Now it's just Max and the kid. Ma-shul, you'll notice he calls him. The *shul* part is right. He is Max's *shul*. He comes to the kid to worship, if you know what I mean. Ma-shul is someday going to be a very rich man. I wonder if he has any of his old man's talent."

"That kind of thing can be pretty hard to measure."

"I was only thinking that Maxie Wexler's native shrewdness with Haavahd and Oxford behind it could be a really dangerous combination, if you know what I mean, professor."

Just then a small, slender man with heavily pomaded thick black hair slapped Morrie Mutchnik on the back. "Mutsy, you old putz," he said, "where'd you get that jacket, at a dead maharaja's estate sale?" Mutchnik introduced him to me as Earl Schneider, also in the industry. They began to talk, and I slipped away. I finished my drink and, figuring it was time to leave, began to look for Marshall. He was still with his father. When I told him that I had to be off, he said he would walk me to the door.

As we made our way down the long hall, Marshall asked if I had any advice for him about Oxford. I replied I hadn't any, except not to let himself be turned into an Englishman. Probably he already knew the same names in philosophy in England that I did—Isaiah Berlin, A. J. Ayer, Stuart Hampshire, a younger man named Bernard Williams—though I shouldn't be surprised if he discovered that the best teachers turned out to be people neither of us had heard of. He asked whether I would mind if he wrote to me from Oxford, and I said that I would be pleased to hear from him though I was myself not the world's greatest correspondent. We shook hands as the elevator arrived, and glancing down quickly at his hand clasping mine, I felt the pressure of the thumb that so resembled his father's and for some reason I felt I understood this extraordinary young man a little better.

I NEVER really expected Marshall Wexler to write from England, and so was a bit surprised when his letters began to arrive not long after his own arrival at Oxford. They were, I thought, strangely intimate, given that we scarcely knew each other and had only the background scenery of the city of Chicago in common. They read like nothing quite so much as entries in a journal, but a journal that he, Marshall, for some reason chose to pass along to me to comment upon if I wished. They were well written, filled with information and gossip about English intellectual life. Much talk about "Isaiah" and "Freddy" Ayer, stories of witty put-downs delivered by Maurice Bowra and John Sparrow ("I remember your name, all right, it's merely your face that I cannot recall")—slightly stale crumbs from high table, or so I concluded, as they were picked up at the lower tables at which Marshall sat as a student at Balliol.

But the real subject of these letters, it began slowly to emerge, was what I should today call Marshall Wexler's brilliant career. At this stage, of course, the subject was more precisely what Marshall Wexler should do to make a brilliant career.

I'm not at all sure Marshall wanted my advice, or needed it. Instead he appeared merely to want someone before whom to sound out his ideas, someone who appeared to have more experience of the world than he. There was, in fact, six years'

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difference in our ages, not enough for me to play at being fatherly or even avuncular. So I just listened, or rather read, as Marshall set out his plans, and when I commented upon them at all I did so in a neutral sort of way.

Early in his correspondence, Marshall wrote that he had decided the academic life was not for him, even though he thought he had some talent for it. He recognized, he claimed, the grandeur of real scholarship practiced at the highest level—at the level of an Erich Auerbach or a Gershom Scholem or a Ronald Syme, such were the names he invoked—but the academic world was populated by much lesser men, was, he felt, in fact dominated by them (present company excepted, he tactfully added), and didn't offer anything like the scope of possibility or richness of environment he required. He had thought about the law, but the time of apprenticeship before he could hope to be able to do anything significant seemed to him altogether too long. Business, where his father had succeeded so handsomely, held no interest; and with his father's fortune and generosity, money, he knew, was not going to be his great problem. He had thought about government, possibly diplomacy, but then he knew that things were not easy for Jews in the State Department and saw no point in wasting time blazing trails. He regretted not having cultivated the scientific side of his education, for science was both serious and offered a chance for life in the great world (he mentioned C. P. Snow, at that time a great figure in England), but suspected that he might not have the aptitude for doing science at the top level, or it would have shown itself by now.

Almost by elimination, then, that left journalism. In one of his letters, Marshall mentioned his fascination with the career of Walter Lippmann, whose early books he had been reading and who, like himself, was the son of a rich man and had been a Jew at Harvard. Walter Lippmann's was a career of a kind to which he, Marshall, aspired. He thought, he said in this letter, that he might write to Lippmann—the year was 1964 and Lippmann was then a very active sixty-five—to see if he would be willing to offer advice. My guess is that Marshall must have written such a letter, though I don't know for certain. I base this on the fact that Marshall's first job after completing his second year at Oxford was at *Newsweek*, where Walter Lippmann himself in those days had a column. I base it, too, on the knowledge I was soon to acquire of Marshall's habit of writing flattering letters to the intellectually illustrious.

One day while I was lunching at the Quadrangle Club at the university, Samuel Garskov, a famously gruff character in the history department who had recently won a Pulitzer for his two-volume biography of James Madison, interrupted my conversation with a colleague to ask if I knew a kid named Marshall Wexler. When I said I did, Garskov removed from the breast pocket of his jacket a crumpled letter, typed on light blue stationery under a Balliol letterhead. I don't recall all that the letter contained but its main point was to thank Professor Garskov for his fine Madison volumes, which put all of American history for the first time in clear perspective, at least for his correspondent, who also felt that the work would have a very long life. In a few economical paragraphs Marshall managed to convey that he was young, intellectually penetrating, a fellow Jew, and immensely admiring of the historiographical genius of Samuel H. Garskov. In a postscript Marshall asked that Garskov say hello to me, his former teacher at Harvard.

"So, Kaufman," said Sam, not bothering to apologize for breaking into the conversation, "who is this kid? Is he some kind of bullshit artist, or is he on the level?"

"I don't know, Sam," I replied, "but you have to admire his taste in historians."

"Up yours," he said.

Over the next few years, I discovered that Marshall had written similar letters to Hannah Arendt, Saul Bellow, Edward Shils, Milton Friedman (setting out mild disagreement but expressing "enormous admiration" for Friedman's intellectual rigor), and a number of other luminaries at Chicago. Did Marshall, I wonder, send similar epistolary corsages to people at Princeton, Yale, Berkeley, and Stanford (he had earlier had a chance to canvas Harvard in person)? I don't know how well these Marshall-grams, as I began to think of them, went down elsewhere, but for the most part they succeeded at Chicago. And why not? To be told that one's work is indispensable by someone young, highly intelligent, and obviously on his way up in the world is not something that tends to invite skepticism. Unlike Sam Garskov, at least two other recipients of Marshall-grams remarked to me, in the same thoughtful tone of voice, "He seems an interesting young man."

Marshall Wexler was an interesting young man, though they didn't know the half of it, and I myself had only begun to know maybe 55 percent. Marshall had telephoned me once or twice from his father's apartment when he was home from Oxford on holiday. Once we were going to meet for lunch at the Standard Club, where he had a junior membership, but owing to complications of one sort or another the lunch never came off. But his letters, written at irregular intervals, continued to arrive.

After Oxford, Marshall began his job at *Newsweek*. He was one of fifteen or so associate editors and worked on what they called there "the front of the book," specifically on national news. This was in the days before the newsmagazines permitted bylines, so it was impossible to tell what bits and pieces were his. He continued to write to me

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from New York, perhaps a letter every few months. He had taken to New York right off—he had an apartment on East 61st Street, just off Madison—and felt that he hadn't made a mistake in going into journalism. He said that he didn't expect to remain any longer than necessary at *Newsweek*, though for now he was still learning enough about the inner workings of journalism to make staying on worth his while. Not the least interesting to him were the struggles for power among the editors near the top of the minutely small-type masthead. Around this time, I published a small book, with Yale University Press, on *The Meno*, a copy of which I thought of sending to him but in the end decided not to.

It was in the summer of 1967 that I next heard from Marshall. He was, he told me over the telephone, in town for his father's funeral, which had taken place three days earlier. I offered condolences and apologized for not knowing; I didn't read the Chicago papers and so missed the obituary. Max Wexler was fifty-two—Marshall was himself twenty-six that summer. He had died in the elevator of the 3400 building, of a heart attack, on his way to work. Marshall wanted to know if we could have our too-long-delayed lunch, perhaps the next day, at noon, at the Standard Club. It would be good to see me again, he said. I told him it would be good to see him, too, and wondered, fleetingly, if I meant it.

It was one of those steamy Chicago summer days, and after walking over from the Illinois Central Station to the Standard Club I felt as if I could use a change of shirt, if not of skin. But once inside that anonymous gray building on Plymouth Court across from the John Marshall Law School, all seemed shady and cool. I sat on a maroon leather couch, enjoying the air conditioning and watching older Jewish men, expensively but not flashily tailored, most of them in gray suits and earnest neckties, greeting one another with confident handshakes. The only discordant note was a Filipino nurse attempting to crash through the deafness of an older man, also in an expensive gray suit, seated at a small table near the door; she was yelling at him not to worry, his son and daughter-in-law would be here soon.

Marshall arrived five minutes late, in a blue blazer, gray trousers, black loafers, a blue tie with yellow stripes not quite pulled all the way up to his collar button. The pudginess of his Harvard days had solidified into adult weight. His already thinning hair had receded further, but he now wore it combed over his ears and long in the back, a concession to the style of the day.

"Ben," he said, "what a pleasure after all this time." In his letters he had always addressed me as professor, but I was going to tell him to call me by my first name anyhow. We shook hands, and he touched my elbow, steering me over to the bank of elevators.

He had reserved a table in the men's grill. It was comfortable room, where we were seated by a mulatto maître d', served by an Italian waiter, and had our dishes cleared by Mexican busboys. A certain quantity of smoke drifted to the ceiling, but it was the smoke of very good cigars.

Once more I offered condolences on his father's death.

"He was a remarkable man, my father," Marshall said. "He knew what he wanted, and through concentrated effort he got it." He reached out for a roll, which he broke in half with those same short strong thumbs of his father.

"You know, my father's death has taken me out of the financial wars for good," he said. "He arranged things so that I shouldn't have to worry about money for the rest of my life. It's an interesting position to be in."

"I should think it would be," I said. I was myself sweating out tenure at that time, and it looked to be no sure thing.

"I realize most people dream about being in my situation," he said, buttering the half roll, "but in a curious way not having to earn money makes it more pressing to figure out what you do with your life. For most of the men in this room, you know, that isn't a very serious question. For them what you do with your life is you make money, you invest money, you give some of your money to good causes, you arrange to pass your money on to your children in an orderly way. It's a lot simpler."

Marshall ordered a bowl of vegetable soup, a steak sandwich, very rare, with grilled onions and fried potatoes, and asked for a double order of coleslaw. He drank two martinis before lunch and sipped at a third with his meal. He must have smoked eight or ten cigarettes with his coffee, during which he devoured the small plate of brownies and cookies that the Standard Club, famous in Chicago for its food, set out at the end of a meal. Through lunch Marshall told me about the current power struggle at *Newsweek*, laying it out in considerable detail, adding that he had sided with the right party, which meant that he soon figured to be promoted to senior editor, the youngest in the history of the magazine. He would have the opportunity, if he wished, of becoming Paris bureau chief or covering the war in Vietnam, which was then heating up tremendously. Marshall was a man with alternatives, a man rich in possibilities.

"You know, Ben," he said, looking at me earnestly, "this country is going to be up for grabs, and before too long. The blacks, the universities, maybe even the white working class are going to cause terrific disruption. And our war in Vietnam is going to make it all wilder. A big shake-up is in store. A man has to position himself for what lies ahead."

"My own position remains the same," I replied.

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"I'm just another guy trying to get his work done. I'm not for disruption, and I hope you're wrong in your predictions. I only want the conditions that will allow me to write my books, teach my students, raise my family—did I tell you that my wife is pregnant?—maybe get a little smarter about the world."

"You have no desire to be in on the action, to be part of the life of your time?"

"I suppose not," I replied, "at least not in the way I sense you do. My interests are scholarly and so are my instincts. I don't mind standing well off to the sidelines and watching other people making history."

"Maybe it's the difference between our work," he said. "Journalism excites the appetite for action and influence. To go into it for any other reason would be pretty stupid, wouldn't it? I mean, it isn't complex enough to devote your life to practicing it the way you would an art; and nothing that comes out of it lasts for more than a week or two. No, the big attraction is the chance it provides to have a hand in directing the action. That, anyhow, is what I want."

Back on the steamy Loop streets, after we had shaken hands and gone our separate ways, I thought about Marshall Wexler's unusual freedom. He was intelligent and talented—and his talent and intelligence, combined with his high yet not inaccurate estimate of himself, kept him from making the silly mistake of starting at the bottom. And now he was rich, very rich, "out of the financial wars," as he put it at lunch. There was great hunger in him, and not only for drink and rare steaks and cigarettes, which I took to be the outward manifestations of a deep inward craving. There was also, I sensed, something missing, though I couldn't just now say what it was. Marshall could, I supposed, go a long way. It would be interesting to see how far.

A YEAR or so later I had a call from Marshall in New York. He was coming to Chicago as part of *Newsweek*'s team covering the 1968 Democratic convention. We agreed to meet at the magazine's suite at the Conrad Hilton. Marshall mentioned over the phone that he expected it to be a wild convention. And in fact the night before the opening there were wild doings in Lincoln Park. Allen Ginsberg was chanting for peace, Abbie Hoffman was full of hijinks, the police chased people who were lighting bonfires. A Jewish attorney named Elrod tackled a radical on a rampage, and in the process crippled himself for life, which would have the side effect of providing him with a long and traditionally dubious career as sheriff of Cook County.

When I saw Marshall the next day these events appeared greatly to have stimulated him. At the *Newsweek* suite he seemed, suddenly, no longer a former student but a commanding, rather worldly, figure. The door was left open and people drifted in and out, some to chat, some to help themselves to coffee or a drink. A tall man with a droopy mustache and floppy hairdo wandered in and Marshall introduced him to me as Kurt Vonnegut. Later Norman Mailer and William Styron dropped by. Terry Southern came around and so did a local character named Studs Terkel. Marshall knew them all and they all knew Marshall.

"They can smell blood," Marshall said, when we sat down to eat the sandwiches he had ordered up from room service. "This convention is going to be a writer's bonanza. It's made for hot copy. You've got Mayor Daley, Chicago cops, hippies, crazies, freaks of every kind, and more journalists than politicians. In short, all the makings for a magnificent carnival of the highest unreality."

After eating, we walked over to the windows. From this, the eighteenth floor of the Conrad Hilton, we looked out over Grant Park, where a vast rally was in progress. Policemen were lined up at the edge. While we were standing at the window something we couldn't make out happened, for suddenly there was a cloud of smoke that must have been from tear gas. The police had put on their masks and were now cutting a swath with their billy clubs through the crowd of scattering protesters. From the window of this probably $1,500-a-day suite it looked as if a war were going on.

"Journalism wasn't a mistake, Ben," Marshall said, gazing out and speaking with that particular earnestness of tone he reserved for his own career. "It's where the action is, and where it's going to be for a long time. No one any longer knows what the hell's going on in the world, or even what's going on under his nose, until a journalist tells him. Journalists are going to call the tune, Ben, there's no question about it."

That same afternoon Marshall told me of his plan to leave *Newsweek* and start a political and cultural magazine of his own, to be called *New Horizon*. The title derived from Cyril Connolly's *Horizon*; it was to be a monthly; left-wing but, as I remember Marshall putting it, in a "distinctly uptown way"; and it was going to be published in Chicago. He planned to make use of his Oxford connections as contributors. He had hired as his managing editor a middle-aged woman, a former editor at *Vogue*, who was now living with her third husband in Chicago and had very good social connections with various Lowells, Auchincloss, Plimptons. He was prepared to risk a million dollars of his own money on the venture.

New Horizon was to begin publication in the autumn of 1969. Marshall planned to move back into the apartment at 3400 Lake Shore Drive, which he still owned. Publishing a magazine in Chicago was risky, but New York didn't need

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another magazine and the West Coast, though filled with political tumult just then, was almost always death on any kind of intellectual enterprise, or so Marshall said. He asked me if I wanted any part of the action. I wasn't sure whether he meant as an investor or as an intellectual contributor of some sort. But since I had neither the money for the first nor the talent or temperament for the second, I told him I would be content to settle for being a regular subscriber.

"Would you mind if from time to time I ask you how I'm doing?"

"Of course not," I said, "but you'll have to let me judge how much truth I think you can take. Or how much I'm willing to tell you."

"I hope it's a fair amount," Marshall said. "You're all I've got, you know."

I failed to ask him what he meant by that remark, though in later years I thought a good deal about it. Had Marshall, who so far as I knew now had no family, come to think of me as family—an older brother, perhaps, or a youngish uncle—simply because I went back to his college days? Or was it that he continued, in some odd way, to think of me as his teacher, with all the obligations that involved in initiating students into the truth, generally in as kindly a way as possible? Maybe it was a bit of both, with other elements mixed in that I never discovered. If Marshall decided to use me as an occasional confidant, that was all right with me, for I had now begun to take a genuine interest in his life. But I remember his managing editor, not long before she left *New Horizon* after only slightly longer than a year in the job, saying to me, "That little son-of-a-bitch eventually uses everybody."

It was at one of Marshall's many parties in his refurbished Lake Shore Drive apartment that she said this. It occurs to me that I do not know the precise meaning of the word "refurbished," and so I'm not quite sure it covers what Marshall had had done to the place. His parents, certainly, would never have recognized it. All the rooms were now painted starkly white. The fireplace in the living room, once the habitat of the great brass peacock, had been sealed up, the mantle above it removed. Track lights designed in Milan had replaced the rococo lamps. The few couches and chairs in the room were modern, leather, black, spare. A glass cabinet containing stereo equipment was along the same wall as a bar with four high stools of black tubular metal. Mounted but unframed paintings and drawings, most of the former in black and white, including a few entirely black Ad Reinhardt canvases, and all of them originals, were placed along the walls of the long hall leading into the living room. An enormous Jackson Pollock drip painting—it, too, in black and white—hung on the wall where the fireplace used to be and was the only such decoration in this austere room.

I wondered when modern art had become an interest of Marshall's, and one evening I asked him. He smiled and asked if I remembered the famous John Adams remark about his studying politics and war so that his sons would have the liberty to study mathematics and philosophy so that their sons could study painting, poetry, music, and the rest of it. I did indeed remember it, but why did he ask?

"Well," he said, "in the Wexler family, if my father were still alive, he would have been able to say, 'I collect junk so that my son may put junk, at great expense, on his walls.'"

I didn't attend probably even a third of the various parties, fund-raisers, and quasi-public meetings that took place at Marshall's apartment after he became publisher and editor-in-chief of *New Horizon*, though his secretary must have called to invite me to most of them. But the roster of celebrities I saw there—especially during the trial of the Chicago Seven, when the spotlight of radical political action was on my city—was fairly impressive. The attorney William Kunstler, glasses atop his head, long unruly sideburns framing his large face, was a regular during the trial. The cartoonist Jules Feiffer was there on several different evenings. Under the Jackson Pollock one night, Jane Fonda and Susan Sontag compared notes on Hanoi. I heard James Baldwin, recently returned from Turkey, proclaiming, with Marshall's canapés in his mouth and a scotch and cigarette in his hand, that America was a soulless lost country. "Don't mind Jimmy," a famously malicious homosexual novelist said to me, "he just wants to be Martin Luther Queen." On another night, Leonard Bernstein, trailing cigarette ash on Marshall's parquet floor, told Tom Hayden and Huey Newton, in a hoarse and exuberant voice, that for the first time in his life the country seemed to him on the edge of real revolution. At a party for Cesar Chavez, a dozen or so dancers from the New York City Ballet, in town that week for three performances at the Auditorium, leavened a group of middle-aged labor leaders, civil-rights activists, and the usual crowd of liberal ladies, free-loaders, and hangers-on. On another night, an albino-like Andy Warhol offered me $400 for my wristwatch, an old Longines that had belonged to my father.

Marshall Wexler, who not so long before had asked if as a teacher I encouraged originality, moved easily among these people. Through his own magazine and through his pieces elsewhere—the *New York Review of Books*, *Ramparts*, the *New Statesman*—he had begun to be a mildly famous figure in his own right.

Over the seven-year life of *New Horizon*, my former student instructed the leaders of the civil-rights movement that in America morality grew out of the barrel of a gun;

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approved the race riots in Chicago, Detroit, and Newark as acts of racial justice and on the admittedly Leninist grounds that the worse was the better; wrote a pamphlet on nuclear weapons that ended in a call for unilateral disarmament; accused Lyndon Johnson of war crimes and asked for his imprisonment; perversely agreed with the domino theory in Southeast Asia but maintained that we ought to be prepared to let the Communists have Thailand; demanded reparations for every Negro in the United States; and much else besides.

Marshall later stitched these various pieces together, with a lengthy introductory chapter and an epilogue, into a book he titled *The Culture of Disaffection*, which turned out to be a modest best-seller. In it I am acknowledgd as one of the "formative influences" on his thought, though so far as I know I influenced nothing. I found his left-wing views less interesting than the audaciousness with which he put them forth. Although I am by trade a political philosopher and a teacher of government, truth to tell, in my view since the fourth century B.C.E. in Athens things have been pretty much downhill all the way. Rightly or wrongly, I like to think of myself as viewing politics from above the rather cramped perspective of right- and left-wing.

The Culture of Disaffection began a strong publicity run for Marshall. It was the middle 1970's, when authors filled the chairs on all the talk shows; and Marshall turned out to be very effective on television. A local station offered him a thrice-weekly editorial spot on its five o'clock news. He was asked quite often to appear on one or the other of the Sunday morning network political discussion shows. His plain style, clear point of view, and willingness to make extreme statements served him well on television. Whenever a boldly leftist opinion was needed, Marshall Wexler could be relied upon to supply it without either hesitation or qualification.

It was a busy life, and no one ever commented on Marshall's living it without a wife, or even a regular woman during these years. It occurred to me once to consider that perhaps he was homosexual, but there was no evidence of that, either. I thought of him as too interested in his career to have much time for sex, art, or anything else.

Well, I had to think otherwise when my wife called my attention to an item in the Tempo section of the *Tribune*. Marshall Wexler was engaged to Renee Phillips, a tall, elegant black anchorwoman on the Chicago ABC affiliate. She had been a civil-rights worker, one of the first females admitted to Yale, and a woman obviously on her way up in the world. Among people who worked with her in Chicago, I later learned, she was known as the Media Medea. For Renee Phillips, Chicago would be no more than a stopover en route to a key job on network television in New York or Washington.

The next day I was at the State of Illinois Building, in the Loop, to renew my driver's license. Standing in the long line of people awaiting an eye test, I was tapped on the shoulder by Morrie Mutchnik. Excusing himself, he asked if we hadn't met some place before. He apologized for not remembering my name. He was unforgettable, done up today in lime trousers, a black shirt open three buttons down from the neck, showing an ornate mezuzah on the matted black and gray hair of his chest, and a peach-colored jacket. On his thick and hairy wrist he wore a large but wafer-thin gold watch with a black face. I reminded him we had met at the Wexler apartment several years back.

"Refresh my memory," he said. "Tell me again. What's your connection?"

I reminded him that I was a former teacher of Marshall Wexler's and he arched an eyebrow over his black-rimmed glasses.

"Ah," he said, "Ma-shul. I see he is about to wed, or so the papers say. Do you know the broad, by any chance? I've only seen her on television. Cold as ice she looks to me. I assume," he added, with the heavy smile of a man not accustomed to irony, "that she's not Jewish."

I asked if he had been following Marshall's career.

"Yeah," he said. "I see him on the television. I'm even a charter subscriber to his magazine, which if you ask me is a real piece of crap, but from a professional point of view nicely done, if you know what I mean."

I recalled that he was himself the publisher of a magazine.

"You don't suppose he believes all that *meshugass* he writes and publishes, do you?"

He didn't wait for my answer.

"I can't believe that Max Wexler's kid would be that dumb. His old man knew the score when he was seventeen. I think this kid knows it, too. He can't believe any of this political horseshit. He may think he believes it, but not very deep down he's gotta know it's a hustle."

"You think he's that cynical?"

"What's cynical got to do with it? I think this kid is so hungry for power he can taste it. He's got a big appetite and he's doing the best he can to feed it is all. Nothing cynical about that."

"What do you suppose he wants?"

"Look, professor," he said, pronouncing "professor" with an inflection better suited to the word dummy or schmuck, "this is a kid who's burning up with ambition. He probably goes to sleep at night dreaming of someday masterminding somebody's campaign for the presidency, so that he can be Harry Hopkins or what's that guy's name with Woodrow Wilson? House. Colonel House. He dreams about it and just as he's about to enter the Oval Office to tell the President what to do he has to get up and change the sheets. I could

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be wrong about this, but I don't think so. Our Ma-shul is a kid on fire, if you want my opinion."

For Morrie Mutchnik there was no great complication. Marshall Wexler was an operator, pure and simple, in a world of operators neither pure nor simple. The only real question was how successful was the operation. By Mutchnik's standard Marshall was doing pretty damn well. But Mutsy Mutchnik's standard was not mine. In my world—academic, with pretensions to being philosophical—questions of belief and intention entered in, causing things to become complicated rather quickly. Did Marshall believe in all that *meshugass*? Did it matter? The more I thought about it the more it became evident that the question of what, precisely, Marshall believed was less interesting than whether he believed in anything at all.

WHETHER Marshall was a man of the Left or of the Right didn't seem important to me. What did was the utter authority with which he was able to write about matters—nuclear weapons, foreign policy, welfare programs, race—on which he could have known no more than what he had read. Marshall was smart and quick, with a genuine talent for lucid expression. But lots of people had such gifts. None that I knew had Marshall's authority, his easy confidence in his own rightness, in his own ability to see through the tangle of complexity of any subject and emerge with the only sensible, intelligent, and correct view possible—his.

Any subject, that is, but the Jews. Until now, so far as I knew, Marshall had never written about things Jewish. So far as I knew, too, he had no special education or training beyond what I myself had had: rudimentary Hebrew-school instruction ending at bar mitzvah. But now he decided that United States policy toward Israel was a great and heinous mistake, the "linchpin," as he described it, in a vast American structure of disaster around the world. He attacked it with the full force of the not inconsiderable talent at his command. He attacked it, moreover, as a Jew speaking chiefly to Jews. No, that is not quite right: he attacked it as a Jew speaking for the Jews. All of us.

In writing about Israel and U.S. foreign policy, both in his own magazine and elsewhere, Marshall had somehow appropriated the Holocaust—made it into an event whose true meaning had eluded everyone else and whose enormity only he was large-hearted enough to comprehend. If you didn't know who Marshall Wexler was and where he came from, and you read him on the Israeli failure to understand the "lesson" (as he called it) of the Holocaust, you would have thought Marshall was himself a survivor of Dachau or Auschwitz. A note of high moralism crept into the writing. When Marshall wrote about the Jews, he slipped easily into the first-person plural. Whenever he used that "we," speaking for all Jews, I found myself shuddering slightly. Now, for the first time, Marshall became something more than a talented young man who appeared to be winning through. No, now I found Marshall Wexler slightly repulsive.

I remembered his request, when he first began *New Horizon*, that I tell him from time to time how he was doing, and I decided to take him up on it. I called to suggest lunch at the Quadrangle Club. He asked if I minded the Standard Club instead, since his schedule was a bit crowded just now and he would be grateful not to have to make the trip out to Hyde Park.

Seated in the men's grill, after we had ordered our lunch, I began by congratulating him on his engagement.

"She's an interesting woman, Renee," he said. "Not quite what my father would have had in mind for a daughter-in-law, I suspect."

"As we say in psychoanalysis," I said, "say a little more please."

"My father never used any other word than *shvartze*. My marriage would have been a real test for him."

"Would he have passed it?"

"Probably, my guess is. He wouldn't have done anything to lose his son. You know, Ben," he said with a smile, "in me you see a perfect case of a child who grew up with too much love in the home."

After the food arrived Marshall asked what was on my mind.

"I'd like you to stop being Moses," I said.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You know," I said, "leader of all the Jews."

"What're you talking about?"

"I have to tell you, Marshall, it depresses me profoundly when you write as if you knew what was best for the Jews—all of them. There're lots of Jews out there, friend, and most of them don't share your views at all, myself included."

"It doesn't work?"

"It disgusts, if you want to know," I said, beginning to warm to the subject. "I find myself really offended by your moralizing about the Jews and instructing Israel to handle itself more like Marshall Wexler. I think you ought to lay off the Holocaust. It's just too serious for your kind of journalism. And I'd be obliged if you'd drop that goddamn 'we.' I'm no part of your 'we' and don't want to be, ever. I think you ought to knock it off—all of it."

"Ben," he said, his voice filled with conciliation, "what are we talking about here, the Jews or first-person plural?"

"We're talking about you, Marshall. About the state of your beliefs, and how far you're ready to go to get what you want. What the hell do you want, Marshall?"

"I want to be a player, Ben. I want a seat at one of the main tables. Is that so much to ask?"

"And what'll you do if you get one?"

"I'll worry about it then. First let me get it."

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I felt I had gone as far as I could. I had questioned his motives, which seemed to me going pretty far indeed, especially since I was his guest. There was no point in taking things a step further and telling him off—if in fact I hadn't already done so. Somehow we got through the rest of the lunch. When the waiter asked if we wanted coffee, Marshall looked at me and I read in that look that we would do better not to linger.

"Ben," Marshall said, shaking my hand as we stood outside the Standard Club, the racket of street repairs making conversation difficult, "I'm grateful for your candor. I'm not sure what I can do with it, but it's good to know that I can count on an old friend to tell me the truth as he sees it." He squeezed my hand a final time, released it, then turned back into the club.

If Marshall held a grudge, I never discovered it. Two weeks later I had a call from his secretary inviting me to yet another party at 3400 Lake Shore Drive, this one for Arthur Miller, who was having a play done in revival at the Goodman Theater. I decided not to go.

Then, some three weeks after, watching the ten o'clock Sunday-night news, I heard that Renee Phillips and her fiancé, driving back from Green Lake, Wisconsin, where they had spent the weekend, had been killed in an automobile accident. As reporters put the story together, Miss Phillips's black Porsche convertible apparently spun out of control, jumped the median on the expressway north of Milwaukee, and flew into the grill of a moving van headed in the opposite direction. Whirling police and ambulance lights flickered on the screen, which showed the gnarled black Porsche and beefy Wisconsin state troopers lifting two body bags into the back of an ambulance. "Miss Phillips," said the weekend anchorman, with great solemnity, "leaves the scene at the outset of a brilliant career."

Marshall received roughly five inches of obituary in the New York *Times*, chiefly given over to snippets from reviews of *The Culture of Disaffection*. There were no survivors, immediate or distant, and his estate was divided among various liberal good causes. The *New Horizon* struggled on for four or five issues, but without its owner's energy and ambition, it quietly folded. How far Marshall would have gone had he lived a full span of years, no one can say; and it's pointless to conjecture what he might have been like at seventy. When I think of him, of his talent and his desire, it all seems to me less sad than wasteful. Morrie Mutchnik was at least wrong about one thing: his descendants wouldn't have to pay rent to Max Wexler's descendants for his own ample corpse.

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Trashing Wall Street

George Russell

To a visitor from, say, Mars, it might come as a surprise to learn that the 1980's—a decade of stable prices, unprecedentedly low unemployment, and the longest sustained economic expansion in history—were also one of the lowest, greediest, most venal periods in modern American economic history, comparable with the dark era of Reconstruction and the Gilded Age. Yet these are precisely the terms in which the decade is regularly described on the editorial pages of our major newspapers and by the keepers of our conventional wisdom.

The villains of the age just past include the Reagan administration, with its oft-noted fiscal recklessness, and the wizards and cabalists of junk bonds who are accused of having leveraged and pillaged our economy into calamitous hypertrophy. The wickedness is said to be most dramatically encapsulated in one vast, dimly understood misdeed, the savings-and-loan debacle, whose final cost—$300 billion? $500 billion?—is still unknown, but which is far and away the worst financial scandal in U.S. history. Thus, when Michael Milken, the king of junk debt, pleaded guilty this spring to six counts of conspiracy and mail fraud and faced a fine of $600 million and a jail term of up to twenty-eight years, the immediate reaction in many "enlightened" quarters was that he had not been punished nearly enough.

Then, of course, there was Ivan Boesky, the arbitrageur whose trade-up plea bargain ($100-million fine, three-year jail term) was the supposed key to bringing down Milken. There was Dennis Levine, an inside trader whose apprehension and plea-bargaining led to Boesky. There was Milken's former firm, Drexel Burnham Lambert, a once-puny junk-bond/investment-banking company that had stood Wall Street and corporate America on their ear, only to plead guilty to six counts of misdoing and pay $650 million in fines before going belly-up last February.

The charges against Milken, 98 in all, were brought forward under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), a jurisprudential weapon originally concocted by Congress in order to attack the Mafia. It was Rudolph Giuliani, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and in 1989 a failed candidate for New York City's mayoralty, who turned RICO into a bludgeon against the investment community. The Act gives to the state the power to confiscate the assets of alleged wrongdoers *before* their guilt is proven. The single-mindedness, not to say ruthlessness, with which Giuliani exploited this power—as part of the plea bargain with Drexel Burnham, for example, his team demanded that Milken be summarily fired and deprived of his earnings for the year even though he had not yet been found guilty of anything—should form a subject of case-law study for years to come.

The peculiar fact is that the most serious charges against Milken—for insider-trading and racketeering—were dropped in the plea bargain. Therefore, although we know what, under extreme pressure, he pleaded guilty *to*, we do not necessarily know what he was really guilty *of*. In economic terms, however, we do know what he did. And that was to identify, encourage, organize, and ultimately orchestrate an enormous new market for corporate debt, a market that is now in a state of collapse.

In 1970, when Milken joined Drexel Burnham at a salary of $25,000 a year, a junk bond was a downgraded security—a promissory note deemed unworthy of its promise. It was hence officially untouchable in the closed circle of underwriters, traders, and institutional investors who have traditionally provided liquidity (otherwise known as cash and credit) to corporate America and to whom only the highest-rated securities have been considered investment grade. Milken's famed discovery, as a student at the Wharton School of Business, was that the actual risk of default on a non-investment-grade security was considerably less than the assigned risk (as reflected in the high interest rate that the junk bond issuer had to pay). Junk bonds were, in other words, a good deal—if anyone would buy them.

Milken spent the early 70's promoting his notion, and in the process created a populist rationale for his business: supply-side debt. Those who bought junk bonds would be opening up new sources of income—and growth—for companies that had been excluded from the Wall Street debtors' club. From the beginning, in other words, there were socioeconomic implications to Milken's crusade: it was aimed at bringing outsiders in. By no coincidence, Drexel Burnham was at the time one of the less distinguished outsiders in the Wall Street investment-house crowd.

Gradually Milken's idea caught on—the more so as inflation rates soared and investors had to cast further afield for attractive rates of return. Then came Ronald Reagan, the 80's, and, even before that, Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker's use of tight credit to crush inflation, an action which had the incidental effect of depressing stock prices and thereby creat-

George Russell, *who has written on economics and politics for* Commentary, *is a senior editor at* Time *magazine.*

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ing a climate conducive to corporate merger and takeover.

Enter also the U.S. Congress. The Volcker-mandated rise in interest rates, which threw the U.S. into recession in 1980 and 1981, was particularly calamitous for the savings-and-loan industry (S & L's), the most inefficient, undercapitalized sector of the American financial system—and also the part closest to the voting public. Dowdy institutions that had lent out funds for thirty-year terms at 4 to 8 percent annually suddenly found themselves looking for replacement funds at double the previous cost.

According to most cold-eyed economists, who thought the S & L's were in need of a shakeout, the fact that many institutions now faced bankruptcy was no bad thing. But the economists did not reckon on the political clout of an industry whose principal product was money. Amid a Reagan-approved deregulation of the financial industry, Congress freed up the desperate S & L's to invest for the first time in high-risk enterprises, including junk. Congress also approved a doubling of the federal deposit insurance (FDIC) guarantee, from $50,000 to $100,000, ostensibly to protect small investors but by the same token to lure more money back to the S & L's.

In effect, then, Congress doubled the subsidy for mistakes, bad judgment, and dishonest intent by S & L operators, and doubled the incentive for junk-bond dealers to peddle more and more exotic forms of high-risk paper in a market that had little choice but to demand it. Shysters, high-flyers, and pyramid-scheme artists flocked to the kill—though it must be noted again that most of the S & L operators who helped to fuel the junk-bond market of the 80's were players in an overprotected industry kept alive by a special-interest-conscious Congress.

In every rising cycle of prosperity and expansion, what works is what goes. Or, as the painter Edgar Degas, born to a banking family, once remarked, "Some forms of success are indistinguishable from panic." Michael Milken and Drexel were not the first to issue so-called junk bonds—Lehman Brothers, soon to be Shearson Lehman, could claim that honor—but once Milken's application of the idea caught on, everyone wanted to jump in. Drexel's and Milken's problems ultimately stemmed from the fact that they tried, with notable success, to control the market.

Especially the takeover market. Drexel and Milken pioneered in the use of junk bonds in leveraged buyouts (LBO's). In this maneuver, managers, in partnership with investment bankers, bought up the stock of the companies they worked for, thereby assuming hefty chunks of debt; pruned these companies into more profitable shape; then eventually took their shares back to the stock market for big profits. Initially, LBO's were friendly, relatively specialized deals, honed in particular by a small firm named Kohlberg Kravis Roberts. What changed all that was the easily accessible pool of money from the rapidly widening junk-bond market. Funds were almost instantly available to do anything, including to outbid reluctant managers for control of their companies. The fees generated for deal-makers and investment bankers by such activity expanded tremendously, as did the potential conflict of interest for these same deal-makers and investment bankers. Once again, the government played a facilitating hand: under IRS rules, the interest on junk bonds used in takeover deals was considered a cost of business, and was tax-deductible.

In 1986, 3,973 takeovers, mergers, and corporate buyouts took place in America. They "cost" $236 billion, mostly in the form of debt. At that level of activity, all the traditional corporate citadels of America could—and did—feel besieged. And there was really no one else to focus on but Milken, whose control of the junk market was truly masterful, on a level, perhaps, with the control exercised by the great trust-builders of the late 19th century. Outside of rarefied financial circles, however, very few people have ever understood what goes on in securities markets anyway. They seem specialized, complex, and breathtakingly arcane, and at the same time stupid, brawling, and vulgar. The kind of money sloshing around in those markets—and the percentages that could cling to even relatively minor hands—created its own kind of hypnosis, not to mention envy. The forces that actually made the markets work were largely invisible (as Adam Smith might have observed), and rational only in their apparent irrationality. What could be seen was the stuff of journalism and innuendo.

UNFORTUNATELY, the visible is almost all one gets in most of the popular books that have poured out, junk-bond fashion, following the scandals of the last eighteen months. Readers can gain a great deal of vicarious enjoyment, for instance, though not much enlightenment, from *Barbarians at the Gate* by Bryan Burrough and John Helyar.* This is a detailed and intriguing recapitulation of the 1988 hostile takeover of RJR Nabisco by Kohlberg Kravis Roberts—which, by its size, has become a metaphoric representation of all 80's real and imagined greed and folly.

The symbolic presence here is that of Ross Johnson, an amiable, golf-loving Canadian marketing man who ascended to the top of the merged and remerged food-and-tobacco giant, then committed corporate *seppuku* when he tried to organize an LBO of the company. Johnson's real forte, as the authors show, was corporate politics, and he was especially good at narcotizing his boards of directors with goodies dipped from the company's bounteous cash flow. Johnson's personal perks have become justly famous: the professional golf buddies paid as consultants, the immense corporate air fleet and houses alongside Florida golf courses. Altogether, this is a story that goes far toward proving a charge made frequently by one of the most successful corporate raiders, Carl Icahn: modern American corporations are inefficient, run indulgently in favor of incumbent management, and immune to shareholder pressure.

Burrough and Helyar present the battle for control of RJR as a

* Harper & Row, 528 pp., $22.95.

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contest between a blundering Peter Cohen, Johnson's main investment banker (and, until his recent resignation, president of Shearson Lehman), and a tougher, smarter Henry Kravis, whose desire to win eventually caused him to toss in a bid that the cruel marketplace was by then signaling as too high. Cohen eventually paid for his hubris with his job. As for Kravis, some of his elaborate securities packages are now showing severe signs of strain.

At bottom, however, *Barbarians* is a variation on standard, behind-the-scenes political reporting, colored as much by the selective revelations of sources as by the reporters' own judgments. In the end, the authors settle for the idea that the battle for control of the company was an illustration of nothing more than human folly and vanity. RJR Nabisco, they say, "became a vast prism through which scores of Wall Streeters beheld their reflected glories." Well, maybe, but so what?

In *True Greed,* Hope Lampert* provides an even more prosaic view of this allegedly revelatory takeover battle. Her jargon is numbing—"Shearson had proposed a three-year reset on the preferred PIK, and Stern was not keen to adopt Rinaldi's one-year"—and her conclusion, a perfectly safe one, is that the future of the LBO does not look good.

RJR is blessedly absent from *Circus of Ambition,*† but so is almost everything else. Its author, John Taylor, has attempted to sew together a number of ideas for magazine articles linking the Reverend Jerry Falwell; a twenty-seven-year-old stock-market hustler named Charlie Atkins; a rude, ambitious, and apparently untalented artist; and a variety of other ambiguous characters into a paradigm of the age. Although the book's prose has bizarre amusement value ("The grasping materialism of the Gilded Age, which began after the Civil War and replaced the Jeffersonian political idealism that marked the first seventy years of the nation's history, dominated the country from 1865 to 1929—a little more than half a century"), the only point, insofar as one can be discerned at all, is that the economic history of the United States consists of periods of grasping manipulation, jiggery-pokery, and selfishness interspersed with depressions and rare, golden moments when a certain redistribution of income takes place. Whatever capitalism, industry, technology, or finance may be, Taylor does not want to know it.

Michael Lewis, on the other hand, cheerfully admits in *Liar's Poker*** that, as a fledgling bond trader at Salomon Brothers, he knew nothing about what he was doing. Nor, as a participant in the "Animal House" culture at Wall Street's preeminent bond-trading firm, did he need to; the aim of bond traders at Salomon's, he reveals, was to fleece unwary customers, make millions, and become what was known in-house as Big Swinging Dicks. The aim of every other trader elsewhere, presumably, was to do the same back.

Lewis's more serious point in an often hilarious book is that the sheer volume of money running through the financial markets in the 80's brought a distortion of judgment that led his firm to overextend itself, so that by the end of the decade it was left wallowing like the rest of Wall Street. Refreshingly, however, Lewis does *not* believe that the sometimes destructive dynamics of capitalism must be explained in terms of a dark driving force (such as "greed") peculiar to the Age of Reagan; rather, those dynamics are inherent in the system itself, and account for its stupendous creativity as well as its excesses.

Hints of demonic or conspiratorial economic forces have, of course, been a fixture since the modern capitalist age began. One particularly ugly aspect of that persistent view surfaced last year in connection with the observable fact that Ivan Boesky, Michael Milken, and many of the other alleged financial malefactors of the 80's were Jewish.

The issue is openly joined in the novel *Hanover Place* by Michael Thomas,†† a former merchant banker and now a columnist for the weekly New York *Observer.* The book, a ponderous historical saga, traces the rise and decline of a Wall Street investment firm known as Warrington & Co., a Wasp bastion that eventually falls into the hands of upstart and shady Jewish financiers.

In a review of *Hanover Place* in the New York *Times Book Review,* Judith Martin (better known as Miss Manners) charged Thomas with suggesting that anti-Semitism was the fault of Jews themselves. The incident in the novel to which Miss Martin pointed concerns a group of raiders, led by a Jew, who are warned by a prominent European Jewish banker to cease and desist from their activities lest they provoke anti-Semitism. His plea is ignored, and the worst happens.

From his weekly platform in the *Observer,* an indignant Michael Thomas denied Miss Martin's allegation: ". . . just as you must have hydrogen combined with oxygen to make water, to watch the vile flame of anti-Semitism spring into being, you must have enviable Jewish success and enviable Jewish identity to combine with non-Jewish discontent, frustration, anger, resentment, insecurity—there are a hundred strains of malignancy to choose from."

An equivocal statement, to say the least. But as for the "hundred strains of malignancy," *Hanover Place* certainly puts a lot of them on display: the novel unquestionably contains some of the most sustained expressions of anti-Semitic sentiment to appear in a long time. Nearly all of those expressions are, it is true, placed in the mouths of bad, weak, depraved, or deprived individuals. And in careful contradistinction to them stand the novel's chief protagonists, Fletcher and Lyda Warrington. Thus, we are told, Lyda "despised anti-Semitism, at least she despised it institutionally, which was the only form in which she'd experienced it"; a Warrington partner is pushed out of the firm because of his rabidly anti-Semitic views; and an attempt to block the progress of the firm's brilliant Jewish analyst, Morris Miles, is solidly rebuffed.

* NAL Books, 259 pp., $18.95.
† Warner Books, 240 pp., $12.95.
** Norton, 249 pp., $12.95.
†† Warner Books, 479 pp., $19.95.

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But all this, in a novel that moves from 1924 to the present, is prelude. For by the 1970's the son of the faithful Morris is scheming to take over the firm, and eventually succeeds. One of his backers launders drug money. The brains of the new firm belong to a genius named Arthur Lubloff, the aforementioned proponent of hostile takeovers who creates "a complex interleaved structure of debt-creation and interaction that only he understood, and to which he was universally regarded as indispensable." Soon after his death in a plane crash, world financial markets crash, LBO-related bankruptcies occur, the dollar collapses, and anti-Semitic outrages spread across the country.

What, then, is the meaning of this leaden cautionary tale? It is that proper bounds must be observed. Thomas, an old-style American Tory, believes in a world that is a profoundly ordered place, with the Wasp naturally, and unspokenly, at its center. Though his protagonists reject anti-Semitism "institutionally," that is to say as a doctrine, they also reject anyone who tries to push into their clubs or to break the Wall Street code as they know it. The crime committed by the "bad" Jews in Thomas's novel is the failure to understand, and appreciate, their proper place. Thomas has repudiated the idea that this amounts to anti-Semitism; perhaps he is right. Perhaps it is, instead, a highly idealized expression of apartheid.

So WHERE does all this introspection leave the 80's, the decade of unsurpassed "greed" and "folly"? The evidence, sometimes inadvertent, of each of these books is that they were an exceptionally exciting and creative, as well as venal, time on Wall Street, and also that they were a time when the laws of oversupply (of credit) and demand were not suspended. What is largely missing is a consciousness of the relationship between boom and bust in capitalist economics—perhaps because Reaganomics sheltered us all from such knowledge for so long. For the rest, these books largely ignore, misapprehend, or downplay the absolutely crucial role played by a liberal Congress in first propping up, then double-crossing, the thrift industry, and accelerating the worst tendencies of the age. And most of them miss entirely the accumulation of talent and energy in the traders and raiders whose activities they more or less piously deplore.

There have always been those who have condemned the workings of capitalism as a kind of fraud. And many are those who are proud to be offended by the Age of Reagan. These books still leave room for an intelligent effort to understand the two phenomena, especially in conjunction.

From Judaism to Jewishness

David Singer

A DEBATE has raged of late over the spiritual condition of American Jewry, and in particular over the forces that make for continuity in that condition as opposed to the forces that make for change. In the usual model, change is considered to come from without, from the stresses and stimuli of modernity, while continuity comes from within, through the mobilized resources of tradition. My own view is that the usual model has the terms reversed: for Jews in the post-emancipation period, it is the process of modernization that is both normal and normative, constituting the element of continuity. Change, insofar as it enters the picture at all, takes the form of attempts at what might be called rejudaization. Such attempts, seeking at a minimum to set a brake to the modernization process, and more ambitiously to make the Judaic element once again the central pivot of Jewish life, have very rarely met with success.

An excellent source for examining this entire issue is Nathan Glazer's classic study, *American Judaism*, which has been continuously in print since 1957. The second (1972) edition of Glazer's book has recently been republished with a substantial new introduction.*

It was as a young "New York intellectual"—writer, editor, part-time professor—that Glazer was invited by Daniel Boorstin to contribute a volume on Jewish life to the prestigious Chicago History of American Civilization; other books in the series included Winthrop Hudson's *American Protestantism* and John Tracy Ellis's *American Catholicism*. In the brief compass of a 149-page text, Glazer put forward a strikingly original interpre-

DAVID SINGER *is director of research of the American Jewish Committee.* *The present essay is a revised version of a paper he delivered at a conference on "Continuity and Change in the Jewish People Since World War II," held at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem last December.*

* University of Chicago Press, 214 pp., $11.95 (paperback).

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tation of Jewish religious development in the United States, focusing in good part on the period 1940-56.

GLAZER was writing at a time—the mid-1950's—when religion was enjoying a remarkable revival of prestige among intellectuals, and he was clearly caught up in it. As he would later recall:

> My only involvement with Jewish religion as anything more than unexplicated practice came in my early years [as an editor] at COMMENTARY, when I participated for a while in a study group that read the *Mishneh Torah* [by Maimonides], but not in any Orthodox or traditional manner, and more briefly met, at Irving Kristol's suggestion, with Seymour Siegel to read the Talmud. Clearly none of this took. But it left me with an appreciation of the Jewish heritage, a sympathy with the effort to maintain and continue it under the circumstances of modern life. But that is where it stayed.

Thus, in *American Judaism* Glazer was writing, as Daniel Boorstin has observed, "from within the Jewish tradition," as a well-wisher. But on the basis of the evidence at hand he was nevertheless forced to conclude that the prospects for the Jewish religion were bleak indeed: "[H]onesty requires one to say that it is likely that no satisfactory example [of Jewish religious life] can be given in the modern world, that those moments in Jewish history when the Jews were truly a people of priests and a holy nation required circumstances that never can be repeated."

What lay behind this dark assessment? Quite simply, the twin processes of modernization and secularization, which Glazer saw as undermining religion generally and Jewish life and faith particularly. Modern Jews, he wrote, were positively enthralled with science and reason, values they associated with the Enlightenment and with political emancipation. These values were epitomized in the Reform movement, the "most consciously rational and universalizing Jewish religious tendency." Traditional or Orthodox Judaism, by contrast, was bereft of intellectual resources for coping with a changed social reality, the more so since its emphasis on deed over doctrine, observance over belief, left it without a "defense in depth, so to speak."

But the main damage wrought by modernization, according to Glazer, was the fundamental split it introduced between Jewish faith and Jewish ethnicity. Judaism, he stressed, was unique in being a "nation-religion," and the tie between faith and people was "so intimate that the word 'Jew' in common usage refers ambiguously both to an adherent of the religion of Judaism and to a member of the Jewish people." Precisely because this combination has always been so essential, the "assimilation of Jews—that is, the disappearance of Jews as an identifiable and distinct people—is a real threat to the Jewish religion." That, indeed, had been the pattern in Western European society. In America, however, something different was happening: the religious element was becoming subordinate to the ethnic. As Glazer put it, ". . .the emphasis on the national characteristics, on the Jewish people, has become so strong within parts of American Judaism that it has obscured what seems to a modern mind the properly religious elements in Judaism—the relation to God, the idea of salvation, and the like."

IN TRACING this split between Judaism and "Jewishness," Glazer developed a basic scheme of periodization for the study of American Jewish religion. He began with the colonial period (1654-1825), focusing on the "dignified Orthodoxy" of the Sephardim. From there he moved to the era of German Jewish immigration, charting the growth of Reform Judaism in both its moderate and radical versions (1825-94), and then the opposition to Reform by the more traditional-minded adherents of the nascent Conservative movement (1880-1900). Next came the great age of East European Jewish immigration (1880-1920), which witnessed the wholesale collapse of Orthodoxy. Glazer then turned to the period 1920-40, in which a "floundering religious life" was offset by an efflorescence of ethnic Jewishness:

> Socialists, Communists, anarchists, Zionists of all types, territorialists . . . and combinations of them all, in the dense areas of Jewish settlement in the big cities, had their groups, their centers, their social events, their newspapers and periodicals. Outside of politics there were the cultural Yiddishists and Hebraists with their circles and centers, their publishing organizations, and newspapers and magazines.
>
> On a somewhat higher social level, there were other forms of Jewish life which had little or nothing to do with the Jewish religion. These were the philanthropic, defense, and benevolent societies.

When he came to his final period—1940-56—Glazer suddenly confronted a mass of evidence that appeared to contradict his thesis of increased Jewish ethnicity and decreased Jewish religious practice. These years, after all, saw the great push of second-generation American Jews into suburbia, a push that was accompanied by the phenomenal growth of Conservative and Reform synagogues, by a sharp rise in the number of children receiving some form of Jewish religious education, and even by a modest strengthening of what Glazer called the "modified American standard of piety by which one attends services, lights candles on Friday night, and observes the major holidays. . . ." Did not all this indicate a religious revival in the making?

Glazer was skeptical. In accounting for the growth of "institutional Judaism" he fashioned instead an argument strikingly similar to that of Will Herberg in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* and Marshall Sklare in *Conservative Judaism*, two books that had appeared in 1955. It was, he wrote, in conformity with the *social* expectations of middle-class America that Jews were becoming members of synagogues, and their Judaism was merely the institutionalized expression of the demarcation of American suburban life into communities recognizable by their "denominational" affiliations: "It is the social needs of the individual Jew, and the communal

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needs of the entire community, that the synagogue has met. . . . But the Jews themselves do not demonstrate any strong religious drive."

In his concluding chapter, Glazer went beyond analysis to lament openly the sorry fate of the Jewish religion in the modern world. What had become of Judaism's capacity to produce models of authentic religious life—the "holy community"? With the single exception of the Brooklyn-based Hasidim, Glazer found no such models on the American Jewish scene. So rare was genuine "spiritual experience" among Jews that "any strong religious feeling is looked upon with suspicion in the Jewish community." Given these circumstances, Glazer saw little hope for an authentic religious renewal. "What can still come of [American Judaism] I do not know," plaintively reads his closing sentence.

THUS, Glazer in 1957. In 1972, however, in an interview conducted just prior to the release of the second edition of his book, he found himself able to report some "positive differences" that had occurred over the intervening fifteen years. And in the epilogue to the second edition he spelled out what these differences were. The regnant ideology of American Jews, Glazer wrote in 1972, had become "survivalism"—"the interest of Jews in surviving as Jews, with no additional interest in what the *content* of Jewish life and religion should be." This survivalist outlook was reinforced by a rising tide of black militancy, by New Left hostility to Israel, by the emergence of the Soviet Union as the world center of anti-Semitism, and by the growth of Holocaust consciousness. But first and foremost it was shaped by the "extraordinary days of June 1967," the time of the Six-Day War, in which Jews came to see themselves as "specially threatened and specially worthy of whatever efforts were necessary for survival."

Yet survival was not just a practical imperative for Jews in the post-June 1967 era; it was virtually a "theological category." Glazer was genuinely impressed with survivalism's energizing impact on American Jews, with the way it led "to a new intensity of self-consciousness and a new level of concern for Jewish issues, among them religious issues." He took particular note of the rise of the Jewish student movement and the development of a serious current of religious reflection. Certainly this was a significant improvement over the situation in the early 1960's, when "interest in Jewish religion and Jewish issues . . . reached a nadir. . . ."

At the same time, however, Glazer's old skepticism was far from gone. He could not help wondering about survivalism's ultimate carrying power for Jewish religious life and hence for Jewish continuity. Might it not, like the institutional Judaism of the late 1940's and the 1950's, be just another form of ethnicity in the guise of religiosity? "Was not the Jewish religion itself pressed into the service of mere survival, since so many Jews identified with synagogues and temples not because of concern for religion but because they wanted to stay with Jews, to strengthen the Jewish causes and communal life, and to ensure that their children married Jews—all pure 'survivalist' aims?" And if this was so, was not survivalism wholly inadequate as a force to preserve Judaism and hence inevitably Jewishness as well?

HERE we come to the one apparent weak spot in Glazer's analysis. As was pointed out by a number of contributors to a retrospective discussion of *American Judaism* ("Revisiting a Classic," *American Jewish History*, December 1987), postwar Orthodox Judaism hardly figures at all in Glazer's scheme—and yet, especially in the years since the publication of his first edition, Orthodoxy had not only undergone a revival, it had become quite an aggressive force in Jewish life. In short, a movement which Glazer had taken to be, at best, a residual phenomenon—a "'saving remnant' that supplies the fund of Jewish knowledge on which all the rest draw," as he put it in the 1957 edition—was back on the scene with a vengeance.

Nor was the most dynamic element within Orthodoxy itself made up of the "modern" Orthodox—those who seek some form of engagement with contemporary society and culture. The undeniable achievements of this group paled by comparison with the traditionalist Orthodox sector—the "black-hat" yeshiva world and the hasidic communities. Here was an element that openly rejected modernity—limiting the secular education of its children, spurning modern cultural life, opposing contacts with both Gentiles and non-Orthodox Jews—but which was nonetheless thriving, to the point where it had become the dominant group within Orthodoxy. Not only had the traditionalists succeeded in moving the whole Orthodox community in a more "rightward" direction, they were also managing to attract a substantial number of recruits—*ba'alei t'shuva*—from among the most modernized and secularized sectors of American Jewry.

When, in the concluding chapter of *American Judaism*, Glazer had invoked the Brooklyn-based Hasidim as the model of a holy community, he was indulging in mere sentimentalism. But the sentimentalism of 1957 turned out to be the plain realism of 1987 and today. Orthodoxy, especially traditionalist Orthodoxy, had defied "the laws of religious gravity" (in the words of Marshall Sklare), constituting a clear example of successful rejudaization in the face of modernity.

All this Glazer himself acknowledged in his own contribution to the 1987 discussion, noting there that "nothing in *American Judaism* suggested the recent strength of American Orthodoxy." Yet even so, he did not see sufficient reason to alter his basic judgment. The revival of Orthodoxy, he argued—he had "modern" Orthodoxy in mind—had more to do with "institutional factors" ("turmoil in the public schools, the growing strength of Orthodoxy in Israel, . . . frightened responses to the revolution in values") than with "faith and belief" *per se*. He did not add, although he might have done so, that however significant the revitalization of Orthodoxy might be in its own terms, as an example of successful rejudaization it was very much an isolated case.

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GLAZER'S most recent assessment of American Jewish religion is to be had in the introduction to the latest reissue of *American Judaism*. Here he has come full circle, reverting to the bleak outlook of 1957 and underscoring not only the severity but the seeming permanence of the Judaism/Jewishness split.

What has prompted this latest bout of pessimism on Glazer's part is the emergence of its opposite, namely, a school of thought which seeks to put forward a strikingly upbeat and optimistic interpretation of the American Jewish condition. Glazer mentions specifically in this connection the scholarship of Calvin Goldscheider and Steven Cohen and the popular work of Charles Silberman; these writers, who have come to be known as "transformationists," have departed from the bleak assessment of some of their academic colleagues and have proposed instead that not only Jewish bodies but Jewish souls, albeit "transformed" ones, are alive and well in contemporary America, flourishing in Jewish-studies programs at colleges and universities, in synagogue life, in Jewish cultural pursuits of every description, and in a generally unselfconscious attitude toward Jewish identity.

Where, however, the transformationists see evidence of positive change in the phenomena they enumerate, Glazer sees only further evidence of historical discontinuity, the emergence of something that is "very far from traditional Judaism, too far to maintain . . . Jewish commitment and identity at its present level." To Glazer, indeed, transformationism itself represents yet another link in the same old chain, another attempt to substitute ethnicity for religion. The transformationists, he argues, are able to cling to an optimistic outlook only because they "accept whatever Jews do ('Jewishness') as Judaism." But this is "too easy," in that it ignores a basic question: "[W]hat role can Judaism play for Jews and Jewish life when its content as religion, a religion of faith and belief, is radically reduced?" And he concludes by reaffirming the position he first put forth thirty-three years ago: "[F]or the great majority of American Jews, Judaism remains an ethnic commitment more than a transcendent faith."

In my own judgment, the consistency of Glazer's view over time speaks not to any rigidity on his part but rather to the consistency of what he, correctly, sees: the essentially uniform character of Jewish religious life in the modern context. In describing the historic shift from Judaism to Jewishness, Glazer asks whether this development is "of sufficient gravity for the question of continuity to be raised." I would formulate the matter somewhat differently, and ask whether, amid the steady continuity of Jewish religious modernization, there have been any significant signs of change. With the single exception of Orthodoxy, my answer, like his, would be no.

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Books in Review

America the Powerful

BOUND TO LEAD: THE CHANGING NATURE OF AMERICAN POWER. By JOSEPH S. NYE. *Basic Books. 307 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ELLIOTT ABRAMS

INTELLECTUAL fads differ from commercial fads in that most often they come from the top down, not from the bottom up. Millions of individuals must decide whether to buy a hula hoop or see *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.* A rather smaller number—the editors of top newspapers and magazines, a few television programmers—are empowered to decide what a hot new idea is. In 1970 that company agreed that Charles Reich's *The Greening of America,* with its portrait of a new, more liberated "consciousness," was a hot property; in 1988, it became the turn of Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers.*

Kennedy's thesis was simple: America, like the great empires that preceded it, had overexpanded, and its military expenditures were now so great that an irreversible process of decline had already set in. Coming at the close of the Reagan years, the thesis was irresistible, "demonstrating" as it did that the prevailing liberal-Left view of the U.S. military build-up was correct, and, deliciously, that the years of American preeminence were ending.

Reich and his book are now forgotten. As for Kennedy, no sooner had his book hit the best-seller list than the "wrong" empire began to decompose, the wrong superpower entered into a steep decline. *Rise and Fall* now looks less like a timeless essay and more like a hula hoop between hard-covers. But as with Reich, so with Kennedy, the ideas so confidently expressed in his book still linger in the air. The notion of American decline still seems to beguile many American academics, editors, and, not least, Congressmen. Moreover, some versions of the theory are less easily dismissed than Kennedy's, for they rely less on the problems of so-called "imperial overstretch" than on American economic competitiveness or the lack thereof.

In his new book, *Bound to Lead,* Joseph Nye, a professor of international security at Harvard and Deputy Under Secretary of State in the Carter administration, pretty well demolishes all these arguments. Warning against "loose historical analogies and falsely deterministic political theories," Nye takes up and dispatches the decline theories one by one. If his book is short, it is only because the task does not require a lengthy tome.

Concerning Paul Kennedy's analogy between the British and the American empires, Nye concludes simply that "the facts do not support the theory." Nye contrasts the costs of the British colonies and the relatively small size of the British economy with the enormous American economy and far lower burden of defense and other international activities.

Nor do the international economic numbers add up to an eclipse of the U.S. There has been, of course, "a return to normal after the artificial effect of World War II," which devastated the economies of Europe and Japan. But the U.S. share of global product is not falling, nor is our share of world manufacturing. Moreover, for the last decade the military balance has been shifting not against us, but in our favor. In fact, declines in our economic and military predominance came in the 1950's and 1960's, as Europe and Japan recovered from the war and the USSR acquired nuclear weapons—precisely the years which decline theorists point to as the period of greatest American hegemony.

Will Japan become the next superpower? Japan's power vis-à-vis the U.S. has certainly risen in the past decade or two, and Japan is clearly now a financial force to reckon with. But Nye reminds us that Japan's dependence on access to foreign markets, and particularly to the U.S. market, is a considerable vulnerability, as is its total reliance on foreign energy supplies. And there is more, from the aging of Japan's population to its lack of military power, that similarly justifies Nye's conclusion that Japan will remain a great financial power but no "hegemonic challenger" to the United States. Nye is equally sanguine about Europe, noting that without the true political unity that is at the very most a distant prospect, the "functionalist logic" of European economic integration will not produce a true superpower.

When we try to measure power not in numbers but by intangibles—such as having an attractive ideology, or an admired society, or great research universities—America again comes out first in category after category. In short, whether in terms of "hard power" or in terms of "soft power," "the American problem now is not one of decline." As Nye concludes, the United States "remains the largest and richest power with the greatest capacity to shape the future."

That does not mean, however, that we can afford to be complacent. Nye offers sensible, if familiar, suggestions for maintaining and increasing American competitiveness. He wants to see a rise in the level of national savings, an upgrading of secondary education, and a decline in the federal deficit. Pointing out the great strength America derives from the openness of its society, he argues forcefully against protectionism and for immigration. Above all, Nye sees the *need* for America to lead the emerging international system, for "if the strongest state does not lead,

ELLIOTT ABRAMS *served as Assistant Secretary of State in the Reagan administration.*

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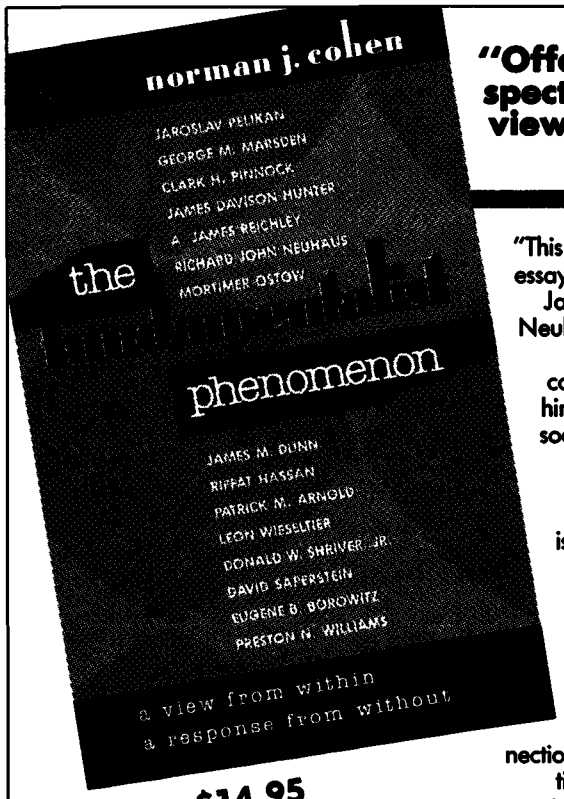
the prospects for instability increase."

It is here, however, on the issue of what the new international system will look like, and how the U.S. should adapt in order to lead it, that Nye's penetrating glance becomes curiously fogged. In Nye's judgment, the next century will bring us "not . . . new challengers for hegemony but the new challenges of transnational interdependence." He notes the "general diffusion of power" in the international system, with small states and private actors—terrorists, corporations, lobbies—now more important than they were at the height of the old bipolar system. Resources like oil, technology, and hard-currency reserves are more significant than they once were. As Nye puts it, "the games of world politics are being played by different actors with different piles of chips at different card tables." The new issues in international politics are "ecology, drugs, AIDS, terrorism" (later he lists them as "terrorism, drug traffic, AIDS, global warming").

How are we to deal with these "challenges"? We must, says Nye, "be more modest" in defining our national interests, and we must avoid the "harsh policies of the first Reagan administration." In particular we must avoid putting pressure on the remaining parts of the Soviet empire, or excessive stress on the Soviet economy. We must rely more on multilateral institutions, and we must support them more generously.

This is of course the old liberal line, tempered by Nye's common sense and experience (he opposes outright economic aid to the Soviets, for example, or precipitous reductions in American military strength). The line would be more convincing if, in the world today, all hatred of America had disappeared, all threats to our citizens had evaporated. What is entirely missing from *Bound to Lead*, however, is any recognition that the United States still has enemies. As becomes evident in Nye's careless grouping of global warming and terrorism, he sometimes shows a curious inability to distinguish a problem from a threat or an attack. Nye writes that force may sometimes "play an essential role" in American policy, so long as we eschew a "lack of consultation or absence of concern about the opinion of others." This sounds less like serious or useful policy guidance than it does like the Democratic party platform for 1992.

In the end, Nye ducks the issues that are likely to prove most difficult and most controversial in the coming years. When should we act to protect ourselves in a world that remains dangerous? What should the United States do when American hostages are taken? Should the U.S. military intervene directly against the drug cartel? How should we react when Iraq threatens chemical warfare and advances in its search for nuclear weapons and the capability to deliver them? No doubt "managing interdependence" is critical, and international cooperation is essential in dealing effectively with trade, environmen-



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tal, and medical problems. But as long as there are criminals and terrorists, and terrorist states, opposing protectionism and fighting global warming will not suffice. The instability Nye fears in a world in which America shirks its global responsibilities will come upon us sooner if we avoid the problems of Iraq and Libya than if we avoid the problem of AIDS.

The Flesh Made Word

FRANZ WERFEL: A LIFE IN PRAGUE, VIENNA, AND HOLLYWOOD. By PETER STEPHAN JUNGK. Translated from the German by ANSELM HOLLO. *Grove Weidenfeld. 318 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by STEVEN BELLER

POSTERITY has not been kind to Franz Werfel, born in 1890 and on his death in 1945 perhaps one of the most famous and successful German writers of the 20th century. In the English-speaking world, many people may recall *The Song of Bernadette* as a classic of Catholic piety, or *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* as an Armenian national epic, but few, I suspect, would be able to recollect the author's name, and of these, most would be surprised to learn that he was a German-speaking Jew from Prague. Even in Germany, Werfel's reputation is a shadow of its former greatness.

Peter Stephan Jungk's sensitive biography is a major atempt to rescue Werfel from obscurity. In this book Jungk shows just what a fascinating character Werfel was—but, ironically, he also offers many clues as to why Werfel's star no longer shines so brightly, and probably never will.

Jungk sticks very much to Werfel's life; there is surprisingly little here about his work. In an intriguing format, each chapter of the biography comes complete with its own running commentary in which the biographer recounts some of his experiences and conversations while doing research for the book—a sort of *Citizen Kane* in words. Sometimes pretentious or superfluous, these small commentaries nevertheless help supply an atmosphere of melancholy and faded memory which for the most part adds to the book's charm.

The picture that emerges is of a man beset by a mass of contradictions which no one, certainly not Werfel himself, was ever able to figure out. This was so from his earliest years, when as the child of well-to-do Jewish parents he was introduced to Catholicism by his pious Czech nanny. Growing up as a German-speaking Jew in a Prague increasingly torn by Czech-German strife cannot have helped create a stable sense of equilibrium. But one gets the impression that the young Werfel was not very stable to start with. What he lacked most was structure: spoiled and indulged until it was far too late for his father to remedy the situation, young Franz was fat and shabby, with a liking for being humiliated and for playing the villain. He also had a pronounced tendency to be carried away by his emotions: the experience of hearing Caruso sing Verdi arias in 1904, for example, awakened in him a lifelong obsessional love of Italian opera.

FROM the age of fourteen on, Werfel wrote compulsively. Ignoring his father and his studies, the teenager led the dissolute life of a "poet." Behind the pose, however, lay real talent: at the age of twenty-one he published *The Friend of the World*, a breathless, ecstatic poem that overnight made him one of the great figures of German literary expressionism. He had arrived, and from then on was never to leave the center stage of German literature.

In early 1918, Werfel met Alma Mahler, the widow of Gustav Mahler and one of the most notorious *femmes fatales* of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. She was to prove both muse and nemesis for the rest of his life, and his relationship with her dominates the rest of the biography as much as Alma dominated her "man-child." Not only did Alma turn Werfel away from poetry and toward the more profitable field of the novel, she was at least partly responsible for a major shift in his political outlook—from support for socialist revolution to a pro-Catholic, Austrian-conservative stance.

There followed years in which Werfel devoted himself to success, and achieved it, in historical novels like *Verdi*, *The Pure in Heart*, and *Paul among the Jews*. Each of these works bore some relation to their author's concerns and personality, whether it was his strained attitude toward Jewishness, his fixation on Catholicism, his Bohemian origin, or his great love of all things Italian. Yet together these qualities did not make a whole; they were all aspects of a character which did not mesh.

In 1932 Werfel began perhaps his most important novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, the first real publicizing of the massacre of the Armenians by the Turks during World War I. By the time it was published, in November 1933, this novelistic account of modern genocide had achieved an eerie relevance: Hitler had seized power in Germany. Two months after publication, Werfel's novel was banned in Germany, as were eventually all his works. In the ensuing period of despair, Werfel tried everything to get around the fact that he had been banished from his readership. As Jungk unsparingly reveals, he even signed a declaration of loyalty to the new Nazi regime—it was, of course, rebuffed. Nor was this Werfel's only instance of morally questionable behavior. Although on the one hand he now began (in works such as *Hearken Unto the Voice*) to emphasize his Jewishness, on the other hand he allowed himself to become unofficial poet laureate to the Austrian dictator Schuschnigg.

The rest of the story is one of flight and emigration. In 1938 Werfel and Alma, no longer welcome in post-*Anschluss* Austria, settled in France. There he wrote perhaps his most sensitive novel about a Jewish theme, *April in October*. In 1940 they managed to reach America, settling eventually in Southern California. During these last years Werfel devoted himself to Jewish and Catholic motifs, notably in *Jakobowsky and the Colonel* and, most famously, *The Song of Bernadette*. The latter, which tells the

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STEVEN BELLER *is the author of* Vienna and the Jews 1867-1938: A Cultural History (*Cambridge University Press*).

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story of Bernadette Soubirous and the miracle of Lourdes, became one of the best-selling books in American publishing history. Mortally ill for the last two years of his life, Werfel completed a work of science fiction, *Star of the Unborn*, before dying of a heart attack in August 1945.

THESE are the bare bones of a complex and eventful life and an enormous literary output. Jungk's is a well-handled—and fair—treatment of an intractable subject. There are many fine moments, one of the more comic being the first encounter between the great poet-aesthete Rainer Maria Rilke and the young "genius" Werfel in 1913. Rilke had decided beforehand to embrace the author of *The Friend of the World*, but on coming face to double-chinned face with him, thought better of it and gave the shabby and unkempt youth an embarrassed handshake instead.

One thing is clear from Jungk's account: the sheer awfulness of Alma Mahler. This, admittedly, is legendary, but Jungk amply confirms the legend. He reveals, for instance, that Alma got a Catholic priest to perform a "baptism of desire" on Werfel's corpse, against the deceased's previously expressed wishes. Even in death he did not escape her tyranny.

But the central theme dominating Jungk's book is Werfel's attempt to come to terms with the dichotomy between his Jewishness and his Catholic yearnings. Werfel loved the Church's wealth of imagery, and its opulence, and he perceived an affinity between Catholicism and his beloved Italian operas, the supreme expression of the culture of the South. Perhaps most importantly, the fact that the Church possessed a definite structure, and was indeed in his view the last "spiritual system," exercised a strong appeal for a man desperately in search of a direction which neither he himself nor Judaism as he understood (or misunderstood) it could provide.

From as early as World War I, Werfel considered himself a Christian writer. Yet he never converted, and he came, eventually, to a positive view of his fellow Jews. The man who wrote about Paul and his emancipation *from* Judaism became, after Kristallnacht, the author of the essay, "Israel's Gift to Humanity" (1938). A cynic might say that this transformation was a product of historical necessity. Yet the pressures on the author of *The Song of Bernadette* to convert to Christianity were immense, and Werfel did not succumb.

In the new understanding which he reached of the two religions, Werfel saw not so much a contradiction as a mutual dependency: Catholicism and Judaism were both threatened by the forces of a spiritually dead materialism, the source of Nazism. Indeed, not only were they mutually dependent, their very rivalry over the ages was due to the fact that they were, ultimately, identical. This, of course, was a point of view which few on either side could accept, and at heart not even Werfel believed in it. To his last days his attitude to Judaism remained deeply ambivalent; if Alma went too far in baptizing him, it is also true that he did not want a Jewish burial.

Werfel once expressed the wish to have lived at the time of primitive Christianity, before the split with Judaism had taken place. In this connection, it is surely no accident that the work which has done the most to preserve his reputation, and in which he came closest to finding his true voice, was *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. This is the story, after all, of a persecuted people, Christian to be sure, but whose history and legends linked them closely with the Jews. That the Armenians were, in a way, Werfel's ideal, a Christian surrogate for the Jews, is suggested by the fact that he modeled many of the Armenian characters in the novel on Jews he had known in Prague.

THERE were moments, then, when Werfel could imagine a resolution to his inner conflict. Most of the time, however, he could not. Perhaps this does not matter; he was never really one for consequential thinking. Hans Mayer, the literary historian, is quoted in Jungk's book to the effect that Werfel rarely, if ever, questioned himself or his work. He "picked" subjects, as if

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from the air; he was a man brimming with ideas, eager and impatient to realize them as long as the plot worked and the (florid) language flowed. That his subjects were quite disparate, his political and religious views confused, contradictory, and often hopelessly naive, was not an issue of central moment.

Franz Kafka, with his meticulous, almost ethereal prose and his penetrating vision of the human predicament, has become part of the backbone of modern culture; his friend and fellow German-speaking Jew from Prague, Franz Werfel, was, in a way, part of that same culture's soft underbelly. He was driven by his emotions and his urges. His very corpulence, in contrast to Kafka's gauntness, is almost a clichéd symbol for the attitude to life he expressed and embodied. Indeed, the opulence, diffuseness, and superficiality of Werfel's remarkable output were themselves, I would argue, ironically related to his adoption of Austrian Catholic culture as his spiritual home. That culture could produce charming art, aesthetically pleasing and even uplifting in a pious way. It could not supply the hard, penetrating eye of a Freud, a Schnitzler, even a Wittgenstein or Musil or Kafka. For that one had to look to other spiritual sources, to Judaism or to German liberalism.

One need not be too harsh on Werfel, or those like him. Soft underbellies are, after all, a necessary part of the anatomy—and in one book, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, Werfel did achieve greatness. Yet the outlook for the reputation of this prolific and strangely unfulfilled talent cannot be bright: if Werfel's work was the flesh made word, it is undeniable that flesh perishes long before bones.

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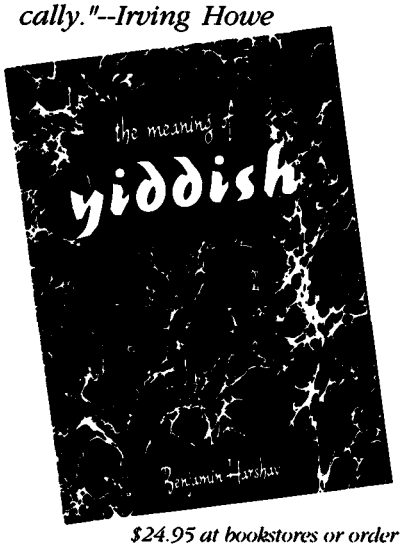

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North of the Border

CONTINENTAL DIVIDE. By S.M. Lipset. *Routledge. 337 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by STANLEY ROTHMAN

IN *Continental Divide* Seymour Martin Lipset returns to a topic which has fascinated him since early in his long and distinguished career as a political scientist: the similarities and the differences between the United States and Canada. Here, he fleshes out and updates ideas and materials discussed in previous books and articles, and also deals with issues which he had not considered earlier.

Lipset more or less accepts the view advanced by the political theorist Louis Hartz and many others before him, from Tocqueville through Hegel and Engels, that America was born a liberal, or "Whig," society. The American Revolution simply initiated a process whereby classical bourgeois liberalism would become institutionalized as the basis of the nation's identity. The ideology was anti-statist and meritocratic, and stressed both individualism and populism. All of these elements, Lipset writes, still play a key role in American life, despite the emergence of a welfare state and tendencies to begin thinking in terms of groups (affirmative action, multiculturalism), and they form a substantial contrast, still, with the political ethos of Europe.

As for Canada, in Lipset's judgment it stands somewhere between Europe and the United States. Canada was founded, after all, by those who lost the Revolution, and it has continued to adhere to rather more traditional values. As he writes:

> Canada has been and is a more class-aware, elitist, law-abiding, statist, collectivity-oriented and particularistic [group-oriented] society than the United States.

Moreover, Canadians lack that American sense of a national self defined almost completely by ideology.

Lipset spends the remainder of *Continental Divide* documenting in copious and careful detail the differences he has hypothesized. The United States, for example, remains under the influence of the (individualistic) Protestant sects, whereas Canadians, who adhere to two churches, have moved toward religious communitarianism. Americans are more likely than Canadians to engage in private philanthropy. On the other hand, Canadians, whether conservative, liberal, or socialist, are much more willing to use the powers of the state than is either major political party in the United States. Canadians are also much less concerned than Americans about individual rights, and more concerned about the needs of the group and the community. Canadian law is less protective of the rights of suspected criminals; Canadians are more supportive of gun control, and more likely to hold their local police in high esteem. (It goes without saying that Canadian crime rates are much lower than American, and most central cities in Canada are cleaner and far more inhabitable.)

Lipset carries his comparisons through a wide variety of institutions and social patterns, from literature to trade unions and business. The results everywhere are

STANLEY ROTHMAN *is Mary Huggins Gamble Professor of Goverment at Smith College and director of the Center for the Study of Social Change.*

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much the same. Despite many indisputable points of resemblance between the two countries, Canada continues to retain strong Tory elements (sometimes expressed in socialist vocabulary) while the United States is still essentially a Whig society. As to whose founding fathers did the "better" job, Lipset modestly concludes that this is something we cannot, truly, decide.

TRUE enough. Still, a few issues and caveats can be raised. On a relatively minor empirical point, it is not nearly as clear as Lipset suggests that the violence of American cities is a product simply of American individualism. A very substantial portion of the difference between the two countries in rates of violent crime (and in the condition of their cities) has to do with the presence of a substantial underclass in the United States. This is a historical factor which does not derive from the culture established at the nation's founding.

Is America still a Whig society? In a sense, perhaps, yes. Yet recent changes in our political culture have had quite profound effects that Lipset ignores. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, American liberalism was quite compatible with an ideal of self-discipline, with the acceptance of a certain measure of social inequality, and with the nonacceptance of at least some forms of behavior in the interest of protecting the well-being of the community. Today, what passes under the name of liberalism is a transformed ideology that exalts (certain) personal rights, that denigrates the values of self-discipline and individual responsibility, and that derides the traditional "bourgeois virtues." Added to this has come strong pressure for an equality of social outcomes, and for what is known as cultural pluralism—both basically quite antithetical to traditional liberalism and to the very forces that have, as Lipset points out, fueled American success. Indeed, our increasingly sad competitive position in the world may owe at least as much to these changes in our regnant liberal ideology as to Japan's supposed refusal to make trade concessions. And the situation seems likely to grow worse.

There is an even greater problem. As Lipset stresses, America is based on a myth of the founding. Our very diverse population has historically been held together by that myth, and we have relied on the myth precisely because there has been little else to bind us together as a nation. Yet for a variety of reasons, not least among them the successful attack that has been mounted in our universities and schools on "white, patriarchal" Western culture, the myth is eroding, and will almost certainly erode further.

Lipset would probably respond that this scenario is unduly pessimistic; change may occur, but the foundations remain solid. One would like to believe that he is right. But if one thing is clear from his analysis of the difference between the two great democratic experiments he describes in *Continental Divide*, it is that America, no less than Canada, will have to find its own peculiar way out of its own peculiar problems.

Thinking About Defeat

MILITARY MISFORTUNES. THE ANATOMY OF FAILURE IN WAR. By ELIOT A. COHEN and JOHN GOOCH. *Free Press. 269 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAMSON MURRAY

THIS is a timely and an important book. It is also an extraordinarily good book, by one of our leading young political scientists in national-security affairs and a leading British military historian. Together, Eliot Cohen and John Gooch have succeeded in providing a theoretical structure by which to understand the historical record of military failure, and thus to draw lessons from the past.

What makes this study so important is its reliance on a combina-

WILLIAMSON MURRAY *teaches European military and diplomatic history at Ohio State and is the author of* The Change in the European Balance of Power 1938-1939 *and* Luftwaffe.

Politics & Philosophy

Heidegger and Modernity
LUC FERRY and ALAIN RENAUT
Translated by Franklin Philip
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– Roger-Pol Droit, *Le Monde*
$16.95 cloth

The Book of Shares
EDMOND JABÈS
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tion of sound political science and sound history. In much of contemporary American political science, the usual approach is to construct a theoretical model and only then to amass facts, suppositions, and, if necessary, fiction that will support it. And if political scientists are too often guilty of cobbled theses, historians for their part are these days distressingly unwilling to draw any lessons from the past, tending to insist instead that history has nothing to teach us; their abdication has in effect left the intellectual debate to those incapable of or uninterested in historical research. In both these respects, *Military Misfortunes* provides a refreshing contrast.

COHEN and Gooch have selected five case studies through which to examine the problem of military defeat, with each case illuminating a different aspect of the problem. The five are: the American effort to intercept and destroy German submarines in the Atlantic in 1942 (the failure to learn); Israeli military intelligence before the 1973 Yom Kippur War (the failure to anticipate); the British at Gallipoli (the failure to adapt); the American Eighth Army under Chinese attack in Korea (aggregate failure); and the French facing Nazi invasion in May 1940 (catastrophic failure).

A look at one case will illustrate the general approach. Cohen and Gooch examine the American effort of 1942 to stop a small number of U-boats from devastating shipping along the Atlantic coast as an instance of the failure of military organizations to learn. In this case, the U.S. Navy came close to losing the entire war. "For the first and only time," the authors write, "Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, commander of the German submarine force, came within appreciable range of achieving the gross tonnage losses—some 700,000 tons a month—he believed would make it impossible . . . for the Allies to prosecute the war actively."

First, Cohen and Gooch set out the grim reality of the battle. Then they turn to an analysis of why the disaster took place. By and large, they conclude, it did not result from a lack of resources alone or, as some have argued, from an anti-British bias on the part of American admirals which prevented them from assimilating the prior experience of the Royal Navy in the North Atlantic. In fact, there was a lack of resources, and the admirals did fail to learn from the British, but these were only two among a large number of interrelated factors that also included poor training, flawed organization, inexperience, and poor tactical performance, all of which combined to exacerbate the impact of the other weaknesses. In other words, the failure to learn from the experience of the Royal Navy reflected problems across a wide spectrum.

UNLIKE many military reformers, Cohen and Gooch understand how intractable and difficult are the problems that confront every military institution. Most military men are fortunate enough to live most of their lives in peacetime. When they are thrown into the carnage and destruction of war, they are like heart surgeons who have not operated for decades but have had to confine their learning to books and to practice on rubber dummies. In such hypothetical circumstances we would not be surprised if most heart patients died—just as, throughout history, military institutions have repeatedly gone down to spectacular defeat.

Yet if the problems confronted by military institutions are daunting, it is also true that they rarely display a willingness to question their own techniques or to examine rigorously their past experiences. Not without justification Lloyd George noted that the "military mind . . . regards thinking as a form of mutiny." This year, 1990, marks the 50th anniversary of the smashup of the French army in May 1940, a defeat that came after a prolonged period of peace during which the French neglected to think intelligently and carefully about the nature of war. We are looking forward to another considerable period of peace; if our military, and our civilian authorities, show a similar disinclination, we too may court some future disaster.

Cohen and Gooch advise military organizations to "inculcate in their members a relentless empiricism, a disdain for a-priori theorizing. . . . The 'learners' in military organizations must cultivate the temperament of the historian, the detective, or the journalist, rather than the theoretical bent of the social scientist or philosopher." This book will, one hopes, provide a guide to just such necessary thinking.

In the Academy

THE UNIVERSITY: AN OWNER'S MANUAL. By HENRY ROSOVSKY. *Norton. 299 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by THOMAS SHORT

THIS is a cozy book and is meant to be. The former dean and now once again acting dean of Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences adopts a humorous, relentlessly self-deprecating manner, tells us many anecdotes from his own career in higher education, and gives us the benefit of his experience and wisdom about such diverse topics as "deaning," tenure, faculty life, what graduate students should watch out for, and how prospective undergraduates should select a college. But the real object, one feels, is to reassure a restless public grown skeptical, even surly, about the rising costs and declining quality of higher education. "That I have written a positive book about universities," Rosovsky confesses or boasts in the concluding chapter, "is most unusual."

Unfortunately, Rosovsky's idea of an "owner's manual" works against his apparent interest in defending higher education from its critics. Very properly, he conceives of "ownership" broadly, as including (his own list) faculty, administrators, students, trustees, alumni, donors, government, the press, and the general public; yet the chapters he devotes to topics that interest certain of these groups but not others leave him little room to discuss those issues, recently become prominent, that are of interest to us all.

Nor is Rosovsky always helpful to those with more limited inter-

THOMAS SHORT *is associate professor of philosophy at Kenyon College.*

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ests. This is particularly true of the chapter on how to choose an undergraduate college—which is little more than special pleading for Harvard and the handful of other top-flight research universities. Rosovsky gives good reasons why the qualified student should choose to study with active and leading scholars; he is less convincing on the question of whether teaching assistants—who are the faculty such a student usually encounters—are a reasonable substitute. In any case, his defense of the research/teaching nexus does not extend to the majority of research universities, where most research, except in the natural sciences, is second-rate and the teaching is correspondingly sterile.

Most prospective freshmen do not have the option of turning Harvard down. For them, this chapter is at best useless, at worst misleading. Until college guides are produced that actually tell something about the quality of the education one can obtain at specific institutions, those in need of guidance are better advised to read Thomas Sowell's *Choosing a College* (Harper & Row, 1989). Sowell's book, which is everything Rosovsky's chapter is not, is built on the premise that different students need schools of different sorts; it tells how to determine whether a curriculum is politicized, whether unpopular views are suppressed, or conventional morality is scorned, and it is particularly effective in alerting black students to schools in which they will often be counted, less often educated.

LET us turn, then, to the topic of general interest: what, apart from his mellow tone and the pleasant picture he paints of life in Harvard Yard, does Rosovsky have to say in response to the critics of American higher education? The answer is much less than the publisher's promotional literature and the back-cover blurbs would have us believe. In one such blurb, the current president of Duke University lauds Rosovsky for "taking on" Allan Bloom, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., and William J. Bennett. That is peculiar since Hirsch and Bennett are barely mentioned, while Bloom's views are discussed in all of two paragraphs. And the "taking on" is very thin stuff indeed. Bloom has pointed out, for instance, that the idea of universal truths is Western in origin, which explains our interest in testing our own values against those of other cultures. To this Rosovsky ludicrously responds that Bloom considers ethnocentrism to be a non-Western monopoly.

The discussion of Bloom, such as it is, occurs in a chapter on Harvard's core curriculum, for the development of which Rosovsky, more than any other one person, is responsible. Harvard's core requires students to take about a year's worth of courses in six areas: literature and arts, science, history, social analysis, foreign cultures, moral reasoning. The courses cover no prescribed content; the idea is to introduce students to "approaches to knowledge," hence, methods. "Can one," Rosovsky asks, "graduate from Harvard without reading Shakespeare?" "Yes," he answers, but not "without reading literary classics." Sounds good. But is there in fact any check on how specialized these courses can become? According to one report, the literature and arts requirement can be satisfied by the following courses: "Beast Literature," "Monuments of Japan," and "The Celtic Heroic Age." As William Bennett has said, "There is an

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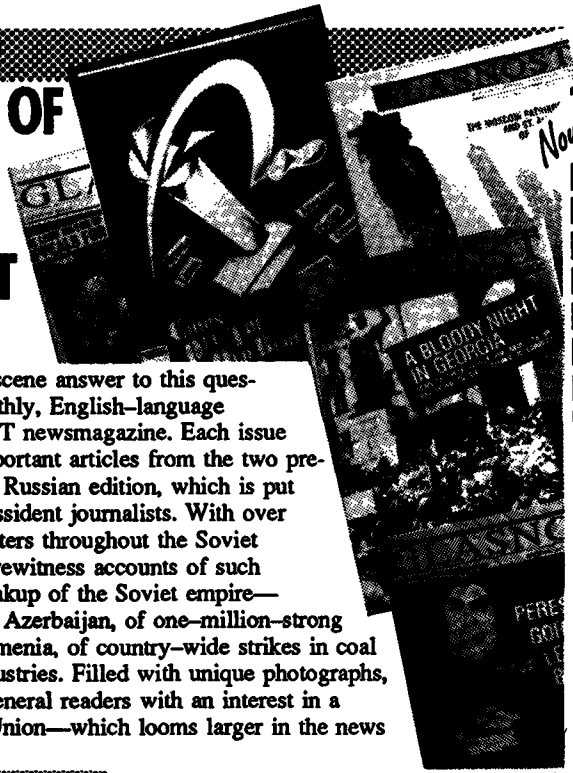

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extraordinary gap between the rhetoric and the reality of American higher education."

ON WHAT basis, then, can it be claimed, as Rosovsky does, that the top fifty research universities in the United States include "two-thirds of the world's best"? The answer is that they are only so with respect to graduate training and research. Foreign students flock to our graduate departments, especially in economics, engineering, and the natural sciences, taking places unfilled by less well-educated, less hard-working American students. Our research powerhouses are the nation's glory, and an engine of progress throughout the world; but they are no answer to criticisms of American *undergraduate* education.

Nor does prowess in the "hard" sciences mitigate the deepening disaster in the humanities and social sciences (economics excepted), where "research"—excellent, good, mediocre, and execrable—piles up in unread heaps, and where the fashions that most influence undergraduate teaching have been veering for some time toward an anti-intellectual and anti-democratic irrationalism. The future leaders of our society will not come out of our graduate schools, or at least their values will not be formed by the technical studies in which our graduate schools excel. Instead, worse luck, they will be products of today's simulacrum of liberal education.

I SHOULD NOT like to leave the impression that there is nothing of value in this book. It contains some sage reflections on such topics as tenure and university governance. Rosovsky makes a convincing argument that the superiority of American universities in graduate education and research is a result of the competition that prevails among them. Elsewhere, uniform standards and centralized, state control (as in France), or an absence of regional rivalries and the secure preeminence of a few (as in Great Britain), result in stagnation. There is nevertheless a problem, Rosovsky says, of accountability. Though he defends the tenure system, he wishes to make professors more accountable to administrators. I agree, although to my mind a much greater problem is the lack of accountability of administrators to the taxpayers and tuition-payers who support so much of higher education's cost.

How can accountability be increased? Rosovsky, in yet another attempt to dismiss "conservative" critics, claims that American colleges and universities operate in a free market: "Is the market," he asks, "not their [conservatives'] idea of a perfect referee?" This ignores the enormous role of state universities and the fact that most of their students can ill afford to go elsewhere. More importantly, free markets depend on the availability of accurate, relevant information of a kind that will enable people to make reasonable choices. In the case of higher education, that is precisely what the public is not getting.

We mourn the death of NED L. PINES (1905-1990),
a long-time member of the COMMENTARY Publication Committee,
a dear friend and a valued adviser.
He will be greatly missed.

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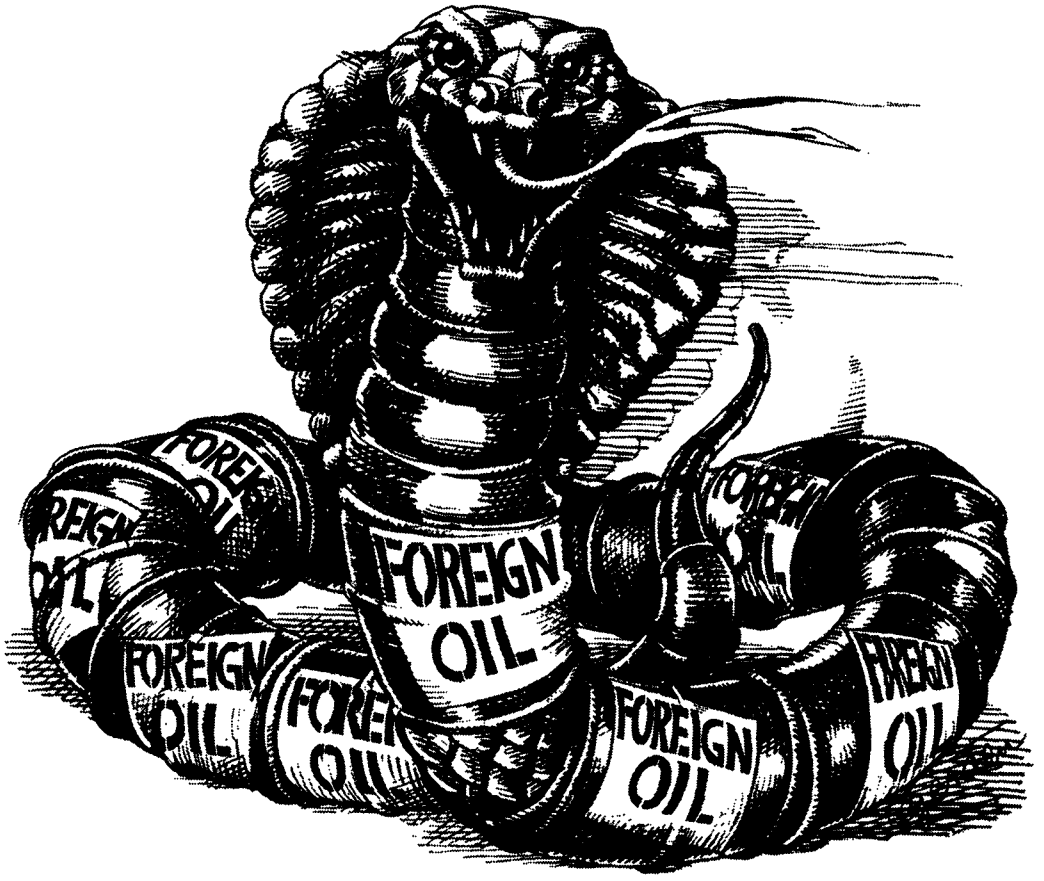

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